

BERNARD SHAW

THE COMPLETE PLAYS

THE MEDALION on the cover of
this volume is from the bust of
the Author by SIGMUND STROBL.

BERNARD SHAW.

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SECOND VOLUME

FANNY'S FIRST PLAY . ANDROCLES AND THE
LION : OVERRULED . PYGMALION : HEART-
BREAK HOUSE : GREAT CATHERINE : O'FLA-
HERTY V C. : THE INCA OF PERUSALEM
AUGUSTUS DOES HIS BIT : ANNAJANSKA, THE
BOLSHEVIK EMPRESS : BACK TO METHUSELAH .
SAINT JOAN . THE APPLE CART : JITTA'S
ATONEMENT * THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE ,
OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED : PRESS CUT-
TINGS : THE GLIMPSE OF REALITY : PASSION,
POISON, AND PETRIFACTION ; OR, THE FATAL
GAZOGENE : THE FASCINATING FOUNDLING .
THE MUSIC-CURE TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD .
VILLAGE WOOING : ON THE ROCKS : THE
SIMPLETON OF THE UNEEXPECTED ISLES :
THE SIA OF CALAIS * THE MILLIONAIRESS

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THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

XX

FANNY'S FIRST PLAY

AN EASY PLAY FOR A LITTLE THEATRE (1911)

INDUCTION

The end of a saloon in an old-fashioned country house (Florence Towers, the property of Count O'Dowda) has been curtained off to form a stage for a private theatrical performance. A footman in grandiose Spanish livery enters before the curtain, on its O. P. side

FOOTMAN [announcing] Mr Cecil Savoyard [Cecil Savoyard comes in: a middle-aged man in evening dress and a furlined overcoat. He is surprised to find nobody to receive him. So is the Footman] Oh, beg pardon, sir. I thought the Count was here. He was when I took up your name. He must have gone through the stage into the library. This way, sir. [He moves towards the division in the middle of the curtains]

SAVOYARD Half a mo [The Footman stops]. When does the play begin? Half-past eight?

FOOTMAN Nine, sir

SAVOYARD Oh, good. Well, will you telephone to my wife at the George that it's not until nine?

FOOTMAN. Right, sir. Mrs Cecil Savoyard, sir?

SAVOYARD. No: Mrs William Tinkler. Dont forget.

THE FOOTMAN. Mrs Tinkler, sir. Right, sir. [The Count comes in through the curtains] Here is the Count, sir. [Announcing] Mr Cecil Savoyard, sir. [He withdraws]

COUNT O'DOWDA [A handsome man of fifty, dressed with studied elegance a hundred years out of date, advancing cordially to shake hands with his visitor] Pray excuse me, Mr Savoyard. I suddenly recollected that all the bookcases

in the library were locked—in fact they've never been opened since we came from Venice—and as our literary guests will probably use the library a good deal, I just ran in to unlock everything.

SAVOYARD. Oh, you mean the dramatic critics. M'yes. I suppose theres a smoking room?

THE COUNT. My study is available. An old-fashioned house, you understand. Wont you sit down, Mr Savoyard?

SAVOYARD. Thanks [They sit. Savoyard, looking at his host's obsolete costume, continues] I had no idea you were going to appear in the piece yourself.

THE COUNT. I am not. I wear this costume because—well, perhaps I had better explain the position, if it interests you.

SAVOYARD. Certainly

THE COUNT. Well, you see, Mr Savoyard, I'm rather a stranger in your world. I am not, I hope, a modern man in any sense of the word. I'm not really an Englishman: my family is Irish. Ive lived all my life in Italy—in Venice mostly—my very title is a foreign one. I am a Count of the Holy Roman Empire.

SAVOYARD. Where's that?

THE COUNT. At present, nowhere, except as a memory and an ideal [Savoyard inclines his head respectfully to the ideal]. But I am by no means an ideologue. I am not content with beautiful dreams: I want beautiful realities.

SAVOYARD. Hear, hear! I'm all with you

there—when you can get them

THE COUNT Why not get them? The difficulty is not that there are no beautiful realities, Mr Savoyard the difficulty is that so few of us know them when we see them We have inherited from the past a vast treasure of beauty—of imperishable masterpieces of poetry, of painting, of sculpture, of architecture, of music, of exquisite fashions in dress, in furniture, in domestic decoration. We can contemplate these treasures We can reproduce many of them We can buy a few inimitable originals We can shut out the nineteenth century—

SAVOYARD [*correcting him*] The twentieth

THE COUNT To me the century I shut out will always be the nineteenth century, just as your national anthem will always be God Save the Queen, no matter how many kings may succeed I found England besouled with industrialism well, I did what Byron did I simply refused to live in it You remember Byron's words "I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country I believe the thought would drive me mad on my death-bed could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcase back to her soil I would not even feed her worms if I could help it"

SAVOYARD Did Byron say that?

THE COUNT He did, sir.

SAVOYARD It dont sound like him I saw a good deal of him at one time

THE COUNT. You! But how is that possible? You are too young

SAVOYARD I was quite a lad, of course But I had a job in the original production of *Our Boys*

THE COUNT My dear sir, not that Byron Lord Byron, the poet

SAVOYARD Oh, I beg your pardon I thought you were talking of the Byron So you prefer living abroad?

THE COUNT I find England ugly and Philistine Well, I dont live in it I find modern houses ugly I dont live in them I have a palace on the grand canal. I find modern clothes prosaic I dont wear them, except, of course, in the street My ears are offended by the Cockney twang I keep out of hearing of it and speak and listen to Italian I find Beethoven's music coarse and restless, and Wagner's senseless and detestable I do not listen to them. I listen to Cimarosa, to Per-

golesi, to Gluck and Mozart Nothings simpler, sir.

SAVOYARD It's all right when you can afford it

THE COUNT. Afford it! My dear Mr Savoyard, if you are a man with a sense of beauty you can make an earthly paradise for yourself in Venice on £1500 a year, whilst our wretched vulgar industrial millionaires are spending twenty thousand on the amusements of billiard markers I assure you I am a poor man according to modern ideas. But I have never had anything less than the very best that life has produced It is my good fortune to have a beautiful and lovable daughter, and that girl, sir, has never seen an ugly sight or heard an ugly sound that I could spare her, and she has certainly never worn an ugly dress or tasted coarse food or bad wine in her life She has lived in a palace; and her perambulator was a gondola Now you know the sort of people we are, Mr Savoyard You can imagine how we feel here

SAVOYARD Rather out of it, eh?

THE COUNT Out of it, sir! Out of what?

SAVOYARD Well, out of everything

THE COUNT Out of soot and fog and mud and east wind; out of vulgarity and ugliness, hypocrisy and greed, superstition and stupidity Out of all this, and in the sunshine, in the enchanted region of which great artists alone have had the secret, in the sacred footsteps of Byron, of Shelley, of the Brownings, of Turner and Ruskin Dont you envy me, Mr Savoyard?

SAVOYARD Some of us must live in England, you know, just to keep the place going Besides—though, mind you, I dont say it isnt all right from the high art point of view and all that—three weeks of it would drive me melancholy mad However, I'm glad you told me, because it explains why it is you dont seem to know your way about much in England I hope, by the way, that everything has given satisfaction to your daughter

THE COUNT. She seems quite satisfied She tells me that the actors you sent down are perfectly suited to their parts, and very nice people to work with I understand she had some difficulties at the first rehearsals with the gentleman you call the producer, because he hadnt read the play, but the moment he found out what it was all about everything went smoothly

SAVOYARD Havnt you seen the rehearsals?

THE COUNT Oh no I havnt been allowed even to meet any of the company All I can tell you is that the hero is a Frenchman [*Savoyard is rather scandalized*]. I asked her not to have an English hero That is all I know [*Ruefully*] I havnt been consulted even about the costumes, though there, I think, I could have been some use

SAVOYARD [*puzzled*] But there arnt any costumes.

THE COUNT [*seriously shocked*] What! No costumes! Do you mean to say it is a modern play?

SAVOYARD I dont know I didnt read it I handed it to Billy Burjoyce—the producer, you know—and left it to him to select the company and so on. But I should have had to order the costumes if there had been any There wernt

THE COUNT [*smiling as he recovers from his alarm*] I understand She has taken the costumes into her own hands She is an expert in beautiful costumes I venture to promise you, Mr Savoyard, that what you are about to see will be like a Lous Quatorze ballet painted by Watteau The heroine will be an exquisite Columbine, her lover a dainty Harlequin, her father a picturesque Pantaloon, and the valet who hoodwinks the father and brings about the happiness of the lovers a grotesque but perfectly tasteful Punchinello or Mascarille or Sganarelle

SAVOYARD I see. That makes three men; and the clown and policeman will make five Thats why you wanted five men in the company.

THE COUNT My dear sir, you dont suppose I mean that vulgar, ugly, silly, senseless, malicious and destructive thing the harlequinade of a nineteenth century English Christmas pantomime! What was it after all but a stupid attempt to imitate the success made by the genius of Grimaldi a hundred years ago? My daughter does not know of the existence of such a thing I refer to the graceful and charming fantasies of the Italian and French stages of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

SAVOYARD. Oh, I beg pardon I quite agree that harlequinades are rot. Theyve been dropped at all smart theatres But from what Billy Burjoyce told me I got the idea that your daughter knew her way about here, and had seen a lot of plays He had no idea she'd been away in Venice all the time.

THE COUNT Oh, she has not been I should have explained that two years ago my daughter left me to complete her education at Cambridge. Cambridge was my own University, and though of course there were no women there in my time, I felt confident that if the atmosphere of the eighteenth century still existed anywhere in England, it would be at Cambridge. About three months ago she wrote to me and asked whether I wished to give her a present on her next birthday Of course I said yes; and she then astonished and delighted me by telling me that she had written a play, and that the present she wanted was a private performance of it with real actors and real critics

SAVOYARD. Yes thats what staggered me It was easy enough to engage a company for a private performance. its done often enough. But the notion of having critics was new I hardly knew how to set about it They dont expect private engagements; and so they have no agents. Besides, I didnt know what to offer them I knew that they were cheaper than actors, because they get long engagements. forty years sometimes, but thats no rule for a single job Then theres such a lot of them on first nights they run away with all your stalls: you cant find a decent place for your own mother. It would have cost a fortune to bring the lot.

THE COUNT Of course I never dreamt of having them all Only a few first-rate representative men

SAVOYARD. Just so All you want is a few sample opinions. Out of a hundred notices you wont find more than four at the outside that say anything different. Well, Ive got just the right four for you And what do you think it has cost me?

THE COUNT [*shrugging his shoulders*] I cannot guess

SAVOYARD Ten guineas, and expenses. I had to give Flawner Bannal ten. He wouldnt come for less, and he asked fifty I had to give it, because if we hadnt had him we might just as well have had nobody at all

THE COUNT. But what about the others, if Mr Flannel—

SAVOYARD [*shocked*] Flawner Bannal.

THE COUNT —if Mr Bannal got the whole ten?

SAVOYARD Oh, I managed that As this is a high-class sort of thing, the first man I went

for was Trotter

THE COUNT Oh indeed I am very glad you have secured Mr Trotter. I have read his Playful Impressions

SAVOYARD Well, I was rather in a funk about him. He's not exactly what I call approachable, and he was a bit stand-off at first. But when I explained and told him your daughter—

THE COUNT *[interrupting in alarm]* You did not say that the play was by her, I hope?

SAVOYARD No that's been kept a dead secret. I just said your daughter has asked for a real play with a real author and a real critic and all the rest of it. The moment I mentioned the daughter I had him. He has a daughter of his own. Wouldn't hear of payment! Offered to come just to please her! Quite human. I was surprised.

THE COUNT Extremely kind of him

SAVOYARD Then I went to Vaughan, because he does music as well as the drama, and you said you thought there would be music. I told him Trotter would feel lonely without him, so he promised like a bird. Then I thought you'd like one of the latest sort—the chaps that go for the newest things and swear they're old-fashioned. So I nailed Gilbert Gunn. The four will give you a representative team. By the way *[looking at his watch]* they'll be here presently.

THE COUNT Before they come, Mr Savoyard, could you give me any hints about them that would help me to make a little conversation with them? I am, as you said, rather out of it in England, and I might unwittingly say something tactless.

SAVOYARD Well, let me see. As you don't like English people, I don't know that you'll get on with Trotter, because he's thoroughly English—never happy except when he's in Paris, and speaks French so unnecessarily well that everybody there spots him as an Englishman the moment he opens his mouth. Very witty and all that. Pretends to turn up his nose at the theatre and says people make too much fuss about art *[the Count is extremely indignant]*. But that's only his modesty, because art is his own line, you understand. Mind you don't chaff him about Aristotle.

THE COUNT Why should I chaff him about Aristotle?

SAVOYARD Well, I don't know, but it's one of the recognized ways of chaffing him. However, you'll get on with him all right—he's a

man of the world and a man of sense. The one you'll have to be careful about is Vaughan.

THE COUNT In what way, may I ask?

SAVOYARD Well, Vaughan has no sense of humor, and if you joke with him he'll think you're insulting him on purpose. Mind—it's not that he doesn't see a joke—he does, and it hurts him. A comedy scene makes him sore all over—he goes away black and blue, and pitches into the play for all he's worth.

THE COUNT But surely that is a very serious defect in a man of his profession?

SAVOYARD Yes it is, and no mistake. But Vaughan is honest, and doesn't care a brass farthing what he says, or whether it pleases anybody or not, and you must have one man of that sort to say the things that nobody else will say.

THE COUNT It seems to me to carry the principle of division of labor too far, this keeping of the honesty and the other qualities in separate compartments. What is Mr Gunn's speciality, if I may ask?

SAVOYARD Gunn is one of the Intellectuals.

THE COUNT But aren't they all Intellectuals?

SAVOYARD Lord! no—heaven forbid! You must be careful what you say about that. I shouldn't like anyone to call me an Intellectual. I don't think any Englishman would! They don't count really, you know, but still it's rather the thing to have them. Gunn is one of the young Intellectuals—he writes plays himself. He's useful because he pitches into the older Intellectuals who are standing in his way. But you may take it from me that none of these chaps really matter. Flawner Bannal's your man. Bannal really represents the British playgoer. When he likes a thing, you may take your oath there are a hundred thousand people in London that'll like it if they can only be got to know about it. Besides, Bannal's knowledge of the theatre is an inside knowledge. We know him; and he knows us. He knows the ropes—he knows his way about—he knows what he's talking about.

THE COUNT *[with a little sigh]* Age and experience, I suppose?

SAVOYARD Age! I should put him at twenty at the very outside, myself. It's not an old man's job after all, is it? Bannal may not ride the literary high horse like Trotter and the rest, but I'd take his opinion before any other in London. He's the man in the street, and that's what you want.

THE COUNT I am almost sorry you didn't

give the gentleman his full terms I should not have grudged the fifty guineas for a sound opinion. He may feel shabbily treated

SAVOYARD Well, let him It was a bit of side, his asking fifty. After all, what is he? Only a pressman Jolly good business for him to earn ten guineas he's done the same job often enough for half a quid, I expect

Fanny O'Dowda comes precipitately through the curtains, excited and nervous A girl of nineteen in a dress synchronous with her father's.

FANNY Papa, papa, the critics have come And one of them has a cocked hat and sword like a—*[she notices Savoyard]* Oh, I beg your pardon

THE COUNT. This is Mr Savoyard, your impresario, my dear.

FANNY *[shaking hands]* How do you do?

SAVOYARD Pleased to meet you, Miss O'Dowda The cocked hat is all right. Trotter is a member of the new Academic Committee He induced them to go in for a uniform like the French Academy; and I asked him to wear it

THE FOOTMAN *[announcing]* Mr Trotter, Mr Vaughan, Mr Gunn, Mr Flawner Bannal

The four critics enter Trotter wears a diplomatic dress, with sword and three-cornered hat His age is about 50 Vaughan is 40. Gunn is 30 Flawner Bannal is 20 and is quite unlike the others, who can be classed at sight as professional men whilst Bannal is obviously an unemployable of the business class picking up a living by an obtuse courage which gives him cheerfulness, conviviality, and bounce, and is helped out positively by a slight turn for writing, and negatively by a comfortable ignorance and lack of intuition which hides from him all the dangers and disgraces that keep men of finer perception in check The Count approaches them hospitably.

SAVOYARD. Count O'Dowda, gentlemen. Mr Trotter.

TROTTER *[looking at the Count's costume]* Have I the pleasure of meeting a confrère?

THE COUNT. No sir. I have no right to my costume except the right of a lover of the arts to dress myself handsomely. You are most welcome, Mr Trotter *[Trotter bows in the French manner]*

SAVOYARD Mr Vaughan.

THE COUNT How do you do, Mr Vaughan?

VAUGHAN Quite well, thanks.

SAVOYARD Mr Gunn

THE COUNT Delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr Gunn

GUNN. Very pleased.

SAVOYARD Mr Flawner Bannal.

THE COUNT. Very kind of you to come, Mr Bannal.

BANNAL Dont mention it

THE COUNT Gentlemen, my daughter. *[They all bow]* We are very greatly indebted to you, gentlemen, for so kindly indulging her whim. *[The dressing bell sounds The Count looks at his watch]* Ah! The dressing bell, gentlemen As our play begins at nine, I have had to put forward the dinner hour a little May I shew you to your rooms? *[He goes out, followed by all the men, except Trotter, who, going last, is detained by Fanny]*

FANNY. Mr Trotter. I want to say something to you about this play.

TROTTER No. thats forbidden You must not attempt to *souffler* the critic

FANNY. Oh, I would not for the world try to influence your opinion.

TROTTER But you do: you are influencing me very shockingly. You invite me to this charming house, where I'm about to enjoy a charming dinner. And just before the dinner I'm taken aside by a charming young lady to be talked to about the play. How can you expect me to be impartial? God forbid that I should set up to be a judge, or do more than record an impression, but my impressions can be influenced; and in this case youre influencing them shamelessly all the time.

FANNY Dont make me feel more nervous than I am already, Mr Trotter. If you knew how I feel

TROTTER. Naturally your first party your first appearance in England as hostess But youre doing it beautifully. Dont be afraid. Every nuance is perfect

FANNY. It's so kind of you to say so, Mr Trotter But that isnt whats the matter. The truth is, this play is going to give my father a dreadful shock.

TROTTER. Nothing unusual in that, I'm sorry to say. Half the young ladies in London spend their evenings making their father take them to plays that are not fit for elderly people to see.

FANNY. Oh, I know all about that, but you cant understand what it means to Papa Youre not so innocent as he is.

TROTTER *[remonstrating]* My dear young lady—

FANNY I dont mean morally innocent. everybody who reads your articles knows

you're as innocent as a lamb

TROTTER What!

FANNY Yes, Mr Trotter I've seen a good deal of life since I came to England, and I assure you that to me you're a mere baby—a dear, good, well-meaning, delightful, witty, charming baby, but still a wee lamb in a world of wolves. Cambridge is not what it was in my father's time.

TROTTER Well, I must say!

FANNY Just so. That's one of our classifications in the Cambridge Fabian Society.

TROTTER Classifications? I don't understand.

FANNY We classify our aunts into different sorts. And one of the sorts is the "I must say."

TROTTER I withdraw "I must say." I substitute "Blame my cats!" No I substitute "Blame my kittens!" Observe, Miss O'Dowda kittens I say again in the teeth of the whole Cambridge Fabian Society, kittens Impertinent little kittens Blame them Smack them I guess what is on your conscience. This play to which you have lured me is one of those in which members of Fabian Societies instruct their grandmothers in the art of milking ducks. And you are afraid it will shock your father. Well, I hope it will. And if he consults me about it I shall recommend him to smack you soundly and pack you off to bed.

FANNY That's one of your prettiest literary attitudes, Mr Trotter, but it doesn't take me in. You see, I'm much more conscious of what you really are than you are yourself, because we've discussed you thoroughly at Cambridge, and you've never discussed yourself, have you?

TROTTER I—

FANNY Of course you haven't, so you see it's no good Trottering at me.

TROTTER Trottering!

FANNY. That's what we call it at Cambridge.

TROTTER If it were not so obviously a stage cliché, I should say Damn Cambridge. As it is, I blame my kittens. And now let me warn you. If you're going to be a charming healthy young English girl, you may coax me. If you're going to be an unsexed Cambridge Fabian virago, I'll treat you as my intellectual equal, as I would treat a man.

FANNY [*adoringly*] But how few men are your intellectual equals, Mr Trotter!

TROTTER I'm getting the worst of this.

FANNY Oh, no. Why do you say that?

TROTTER May I remind you that the dinner-bell will ring presently?

FANNY What does it matter? We're both ready. I haven't told you yet what I want you to do for me.

TROTTER Nor have you particularly predisposed me to do it, except out of pure magnanimity. What is it?

FANNY. I don't mind this play shocking my father morally. It's good for him to be shocked morally. It's all that the young can do for the old, to shock them and keep them up to date. But I know that this play will shock him artistically, and that terrifies me. No moral consideration could make a breach between us: he would forgive me for anything of that kind sooner or later, but he never gives way on a point of art. I daren't let him know that I love Beethoven and Wagner; and as to Strauss, if he heard three bars of Elektra, it'd part us for ever. Now what I want you to do is this: If he's very angry—if he hates the play, because it's a modern play—will you tell him that it's not my fault, that its style and construction, and so forth, are considered the very highest art nowadays, that the author wrote it in the proper way for repertory theatres of the most superior kind—you know the kind of plays I mean?

TROTTER [*emphatically*] I think I know the sort of entertainments you mean. But please do not beg a vital question by calling them plays. I don't pretend to be an authority, but I have at least established the fact that these productions, whatever else they may be, are certainly not plays.

FANNY The authors don't say they are.

TROTTER [*warmly*] I am aware that one author, who is, I blush to say, a personal friend of mine, resorts freely to the dastardly subterfuge of calling them conversations, discussions, and so forth, with the express object of evading criticism. But I'm not to be disarmed by such tricks. I say they are not plays. Dialogues, if you will. Exhibitions of character, perhaps—especially the character of the author. Fictions, possibly, though a little decent reticence as to introducing actual persons, and thus violating the sanctity of private life, might not be amiss. But plays, no. I say NO. Not plays. If you will not concede this point I can't continue our

conversation. I take this seriously. It's a matter of principle. I must ask you, Miss O'Dowda, before we go a step further, Do you or do you not claim that these works are plays?

FANNY. I assure you I don't.

TROTTER. Not in any sense of the word?

FANNY. Not in any sense of the word. I loathe plays.

TROTTER [*disappointed*]. That last remark destroys all the value of your admission. You admire these—these theatrical nondescripts? You enjoy them?

FANNY. Don't you?

TROTTER. Of course I do. Do you take me for a fool? Do you suppose I prefer popular melodramas? Have I not written most appreciative notices of them? But I say they're not plays. They're not plays. I can't consent to remain in this house another minute if anything remotely resembling them is to be foisted on me as a play.

FANNY. I fully admit that they're not plays. I only want you to tell my father that plays are not plays nowadays—not in your sense of the word.

TROTTER. Ah, there you go again! In my sense of the word! You believe that my criticism is merely a personal impression; that—

FANNY. You always said it was.

TROTTER. Pardon me not on this point. If you had been classically educated—

FANNY. But I have.

TROTTER. Pooh! Cambridge! If you had been educated at Oxford, you would know that the definition of a play has been settled exactly and scientifically for two thousand two hundred and sixty years. When I say that these entertainments are not plays, I don't mean in my sense of the word, but in the sense given to it for all time by the immortal Stagirite.

FANNY. Who is the Stagirite?

TROTTER [*shocked*]. You don't know who the Stagirite was!

FANNY. Sorry. Never heard of him.

TROTTER. And this is Cambridge education! Well, my dear young lady, I'm delighted to find there's something you don't know, and I shan't spoil you by dispelling an ignorance which, in my opinion, is highly becoming to your age and sex. So we'll leave it at that.

FANNY. But you will promise to tell my father that lots of people write plays just

like this one—that I haven't selected it out of mere heartlessness?

TROTTER. I can't possibly tell you what I shall say to your father about the play until I've seen the play. But I'll tell you what I shall say to him about you. I shall say that you're a very foolish young lady; that you've got into a very questionable set, and that the sooner he takes you away from Cambridge and its Fabian Society, the better.

FANNY. It's so funny to hear you pretending to be a heavy father. In Cambridge we regard you as a *bel esprit*, a wit, an Irresponsible, a Parisian Immoralist, *très chic*.

TROTTER. I!

FANNY. There's quite a Trotter set.

TROTTER. Well, upon my word!

FANNY. They go in for adventures and call you Aramis.

TROTTER. They wouldn't dare!

FANNY. You always make such delicious fun of the serious people. Your *insouciance*—

TROTTER [*frantic*]. Stop talking French to me. It's not a proper language for a young girl. Great heavens! how is it possible that a few innocent pleasantries should be so frightfully misunderstood? I've tried all my life to be sincere and simple, to be unassuming and kindly. I've lived a blameless life. I've supported the Censorship in the face of ridicule and insult. And now I'm told that I'm a centre of Immoralism! of Modern Minxism! a trifier with the most sacred subjects! a Nietzschean! perhaps a Shavian!!

FANNY. Do you mean you are really on the serious side, Mr Trotter?

TROTTER. Of course I'm on the serious side. How dare you ask me such a question?

FANNY. Then why don't you play for it?

TROTTER. I do play for it—short, of course, of making myself ridiculous.

FANNY. What! not make yourself ridiculous for the sake of a good cause! Oh, Mr Trotter! That's *vieux jeu*.

TROTTER [*shouting at her*]. Don't talk French. I will not allow it.

FANNY. But this dread of ridicule is so frightfully out of date. The Cambridge Fabian Society—

TROTTER. I forbid you to mention the Fabian Society to me.

FANNY. Its motto is "You cannot learn to skate without making yourself ridiculous."

TROTTER. Skate! What has that to do with it?

FANNY Thats not all It goes on, "The ice of life is slippery "

TROTTER Ice of life indeed! You should be eating penny ices and enjoying yourself I wont hear another word

The Count returns

THE COUNT We're all waiting in the drawing room, my dear Have you been detaining Mr Trotter all this time?

TROTTER I'm so sorry. I must have just a little brush up I— [*He hurries out*]

THE COUNT My dear, you should be in the drawing room You should not have kept him here

FANNY I know Dont scold me I had something important to say to him

THE COUNT. I shall ask him to take you in to dinner

FANNY Yes, papa Oh, I hope it will go off well

THE COUNT Yes, love, of course it will Come along

FANNY Just one thing, papa, while we're alone Who was the Stagirite?

THE COUNT. The Stagirite! Do you mean to say you dont know?

FANNY Havnt the least notion

THE COUNT The Stagirite was Aristotle By the way, dont mention him to Mr Trotter
They go to the dining room

THE PLAY

ACT I

In the dining room of a house in Denmark Hill, an elderly lady sits at breakfast reading the newspaper. Her chair is at the end of the oblong dining table furthest from the fire. There is an empty chair at the other end. The fireplace is behind this chair, and the door is next the fireplace, between it and the corner. An armchair stands beside the coal-scuttle. In the middle of the back wall is the sideboard, parallel to the table. The rest of the furniture is mostly dining room chairs, ranged against the walls, and including a baby rocking-chair on the lady's side of the room. The lady is a placid person. Her husband, Mr Robin Gilbey, not at all placid, bursts violently into the room with a letter in his hand

GILBEY [*grinding his teeth*] This is a nice thing This is a b—

MRS GILBEY [*cutting him short*] Leave it at that, please. Whatever it is, bad language

wont make it better

GILBEY [*bitterly*] Yes, put me in the wrong as usual Take your boy's part against me [*He flings himself into the empty chair opposite her*]

MRS GILBEY When he does anything right, he's your son When he does anything wrong he mine Have you any news of him?

GILBEY Ive a good mind not to tell you

MRS GILBEY. Then dont I suppose he's been found Thats a comfort, at all events

GILBEY No, he hasnt been found The boy may be at the bottom of the river for all you care [*Too agitated to sit quietly, he rises and paces the room distractedly*]

MRS GILBEY Then what have you got in your hand?

GILBEY Ive a letter from the Monsignor Grenfell From New York Dropping us Cutting us [*Turning fiercely on her*] Thats a nice thing, isnt it?

MRS GILBEY What for?

GILBEY [*flinging away towards his chair*] How do I know what for?

MRS GILBEY What does he say?

GILBEY [*sitting down and grumblingly adjusting his spectacles*] This is what he says "My dear Mr Gilbey The news about Bobby had to follow me across the Atlantic it did not reach me until to-day. I am afraid he is incorrigible My brother, as you may imagine, feels that this last escapade has gone beyond the bounds, and I think, myself, that Bobby ought to be made to feel that such scrapes involve a certain degree of reprobation" "As you may imagine!" And we know no more about it than the babe unborn

MRS GILBEY What else does he say?

GILBEY "I think my brother must have been just a little to blame himself, so, between ourselves, I shall, with due and impressive formality, forgive Bobby later on, but for the present I think it had better be understood that he is in disgrace, and that we are no longer on visiting terms As ever, yours sincerely" [*His agitation masters him again*] Thats a nice slap in the face to get from a man in his position! This is what your son has brought on me

MRS GILBEY Well, I think it's rather a nice letter He as good as tells you he's only letting on to be offended for Bobby's good

GILBEY Oh, very well have the letter framed and hang it up over the mantelpiece as a testimonial

MRS GILBEY Dont talk nonsense, Rob You

ought to be thankful to know that the boy is alive after his disappearing like that for nearly a week.

GILBEY Nearly a week! A fortnight, you mean Wheres your feelings, woman! It was fourteen days yesterday

MRS GILBEY. Oh, dont call it fourteen days, Rob, as if the boy was in prison

GILBEY. How do you know he's not in prison? It's got on my nerves so, that I'd believe even that.

MRS GILBEY Dont talk silly, Rob Bobby might get into a scrape like any other lad, but he'd never do anything low

Juggins, the footman, comes in with a card on a salver He is a rather low-spirited man of thirty-five or more, of good appearance and address, and iron self-command

JUGGINS [*presenting the salver to Mr Gilbey*] Lady wishes to see Mr Bobby's parents, sir

GILBEY [*pointing to Mrs Gilbey*] Theres Mr Bobby's parent I disown him

JUGGINS Yes, sir [*He presents the salver to Mrs Gilbey*]

MRS GILBEY You mustnt mind what your master says, Juggins he doesnt mean it [*She takes the card and reads it*] Well, I never!

GILBEY. Whats up now?

MRS GILBEY [*reading*] "Miss D Delaney Darling Dora" Just like that—in brackets What sort of person, Juggins?

GILBEY Whats her address?

MRS GILBEY The West Circular Road. Is that a respectable address, Juggins?

JUGGINS A great many most respectable people live in the West Circular Road, madam, but the address is not a guarantee of respectability.

GILBEY. So it's come to that with him, has it?

MRS GILBEY Dont jump to conclusions, Rob How do you know? [*To Juggins*] Is she a lady, Juggins? You know what I mean

JUGGINS In the sense in which you are using the word, no, madam.

MRS GILBEY I'd better try what I can get out of her [*To Juggins*] Shew her up You dont mind, do you, Rob?

GILBEY. So long as you dont flounce out and leave me alone with her [*He rises and plants himself on the hearth-rug*]

Juggins goes out.

MRS GILBEY I wonder what she wants, Rob?

GILBEY. If she wants money, she shant have it. Not a farthing. A nice thing, every-

body seeing her on our doorstep! If it wasnt that she may tell us something about the lad, I'd have Juggins put the hussy into the street.

JUGGINS [*returning and announcing*] Miss Delaney. [*He waits for express orders before placing a chair for this visitor*]

Miss Delaney comes in She is a young lady of hilarious disposition, very tolerable good looks, and killing clothes She is so affable and confidential that it is very difficult to keep her at a distance by any process short of flinging her out of the house

DORA [*plunging at once into privileged intimacy and into the middle of the room*] How d'ye do, both I'm a friend of Bobby's. He told me all about you once, in a moment of confidence. Of course he never let on who he was at the police court

GILBEY Police court?

MRS GILBEY [*looking apprehensively at Juggins*] Tch—! Juggins a chair.

DORA Oh, Ive let it out, have I! [*Contempting Juggins approvingly as he places a chair for her between the table and the sideboard*] But he's the right sort I can see that [*Button-holing him*] You wont let on downstairs, old man, will you?

JUGGINS The family can rely on my absolute discretion [*He withdraws*]

DORA [*sitting down genteelly*] I dont know what youll say to me you know I really have no right to come here, but then what was I to do? You know Holy Joe, Bobby's tutor, dont you? But of course you do.

GILBEY [*with dignity*] I know Mr Joseph Grenfell, the brother of Monsignor Grenfell, if it is of him you are speaking

DORA [*wide-eyed and much amused*] No!!! You dont tell me that old geezer has a brother a Monsignor! And youre Catholics! And I never knew it, though Ive known Bobby ever so long! But of course the last thing you find out about a person is their religion, isnt it?

MRS GILBEY We're not Catholics But when the Samuelses got an Archdeacon's son to form their boy's mind, Mr Gilbey thought Bobby ought to have a chance too And the Monsignor is a customer. Mr Gilbey consulted him about Bobby; and he recommended a brother of his that was more sinned against than sinning

GILBEY [*on tenterhooks*] She dont want to hear about that, Maria. [*To Dora*] Whats your business?

DORA I'm afraid it was all my fault

GILBEY What was all your fault? I'm half distracted I dont know what has happened to the boy he's been lost these fourteen days—

MRS GILBEY A fortnight, Rob

GILBEY —and not a word have we heard of him since

MRS GILBEY Dont fuss, Rob

GILBEY [*yelling*] I will fuss Youve no feeling You dont care what becomes of the lad [*He sits down sragely*]

DORA [*soothingly*] Youve been anxious about him Of course How thoughtless of me not to begin by telling you he's quite safe Indeed he's in the safest place in the world, as one may say safe under lock and key

GILBEY [*horrified, pitiable*] Oh my— [*his breath fails him*] Do you mean that when he was in the police court he was in the dock? Oh, Maria! Oh, great Lord! What has he done? What has he got for it? [*Desperate*] Will you tell me or will you see me go mad on my own carpet?

DORA [*sweetly*] Yes, old dear—

MRS GILBEY [*starting at the familiarity*] Well!

DORA [*continuing*] I'll tell you, but dont you worry, he's all right I came out myself this morning there was such a crowd! and a band! they thought I was a suffragette only fancy! You see it was like this Holy Joe got talking about how he'd been a champion sprinter at college

MRS GILBEY A what?

DORA A sprinter He said he was the fastest hundred yards runner in England We were all in the old cowshed that night

MRS GILBEY What old cowshed?

GILBEY [*groaning*] Oh, get on Get on

DORA Oh, of course you wouldnt know How silly of me! It's a rather go-ahead sort of music hall in Stepney We call it the old cowshed

MRS GILBEY Does Mr Grenfell take Bobby to music halls?

DORA No Bobby takes him But Holy Joe likes it fairly laps it up like a kitten, poor old dear Well, Bobby says to me, "Darling—"

MRS GILBEY [*placidly*] Why does he call you darling?

DORA Oh, everybody calls me darling it's a sort of name Ive got Darling Dora, you know Well, he says, "Darling, if you can get Holy Joe to sprint a hundred yards, I'll

stand you that squiffer with the gold keys "

MRS GILBEY Does he call his tutor Holy Joe to his face?

Gilbey clutches at his hair in his impatience

DORA Well, what would he call him? After all, Holy Joe is Holy Joe; and boys will be boys

MRS GILBEY. Whats a squiffer?

DORA Oh, of course excuse my vulgarity. a concertina. Theres one in a shop in Green Street, ivory inlaid, with gold keys and Russia leather bellows; and Bobby knew I hankered after it, but he couldnt afford it, poor lad, though I knew he just longed to give it to me.

GILBEY. Maria if you keep interrupting with silly questions, I shall go out of my senses Heres the boy in gaol and me disgraced for ever, and all you care to know is what a squiffer is

DORA Well, remember it has gold keys The man wouldnt take a penny less than £15 for it It was a presentation one

GILBEY [*shouting at her*] Wheres my son? Whats happened to my son? Will you tell me that, and stop cackling about your squiffer?

DORA Oh, aint we impatient! Well, it does you credit, old dear And you neednt fuss theres no disgrace Bobby behaved like a perfect gentleman Besides, it was all my fault I'll own it I took too much champagne I was not what you might call drunk, but I was bright, and a little beyond myself, and—I'll confess it—I wanted to shew off before Bobby, because he was a bit taken by a woman on the stage, and she was pretending to be game for anything You see youve brought Bobby up too strict, and when he gets loose theres no holding him He does enjoy life more than any lad I ever met

GILBEY Never you mind how he's been brought up, thats my business Tell me how he's been brought down thats yours

MRS GILBEY Oh, dont be rude to the lady, Rob

DORA I'm coming to it, old dear dont you be so headstrong Well, it was a beautiful moonlight night, and we couldnt get a cab on the nod, so we started to walk, very jolly, you know: arm in arm, and dancing along, singing and all that When we came into Jamaica Square, there was a young copper on point duty at the corner. I says to Bob "Deame boy, is it a bargain about the

squiffer if I make Joe sprint for you?" "Anything you like, darling," says he. "I love you." I put on my best company manners and stepped up to the copper "If you please, sir," says I, "can you direct me to Carrick-mines Square?" I was so genteel, and talked so sweet, that he fell to it like a bird "I never heard of any such Square in these parts," he says "Then," says I, "what a very silly little officer you must be!"; and I gave his helmet a chuck behind that knocked it over his eyes, and did a bunk

MRS GILBEY. Did a what?

DORA A bunk Holy Joe did one too all right he sprinted faster than he ever did in college, I bet, the old dear He got clean off, too. Just as he was overtaking me half-way down the square, we heard the whistle, and at the sound of it he drew away like a streak of lightning, and that was the last I saw of him I was copped in the Dock Road myself. rotten luck, wasn't it? I tried the innocent and genteel and all the rest, but Bobby's hat done me in

GILBEY. And what happened to the boy?

DORA Only fancy! he stopped to laugh at the copper! He thought the copper would see the joke, poor lamb He was arguing about it when the two that took me came along to find out what the whistle was for, and brought me with them Of course I swore I'd never seen him before in my life; but there he was in my hat and I in his The cops were very spiteful and laid it on for all they were worth drunk and disorderly and assaulting the police and all that I got fourteen days without the option, because you see—well, the fact is, I'd done it before, and been warned. Bobby was a first offender and had the option, but the dear boy had no money left and wouldn't give you away by telling his name; and anyhow he couldn't have brought himself to buy himself off and leave me there; so he's doing his month Well, it was two forty shillings; and I've only twenty-eight shillings in the world If I pawn my clothes I shant be able to earn any more So I cant pay the fine and get him out but if youll stand £3 I'll stand one, and that'll do it If youd like to be very kind and nice you could pay the lot; but I cant deny that it was my fault, so I wont press you.

GILBEY [*heart-broken*] My son in gaol!

DORA Oh, cheer up, old dear. it wont hurt him, look at me after fourteen days of it.

I'm all the better for being kept a bit quiet. You mustnt let it prey on your mind

GILBEY The disgrace of it will kill me And it will leave a mark on him to the end of his life

DORA Not a bit of it Dont you be afraid. Ive educated Bobby a bit he's not the molly-coddle he was when you had him in hand

MRS GILBEY Indeed Bobby is not a molly-coddle They wanted him to go in for single-stick at the Young Men's Christian Association, but, of course, I couldnt allow that he might have had his eye knocked out

GILBEY [*to Dora, angrily*] Listen here, you

DORA Oh, aint we cross!

GILBEY I want none of your gaiety here This is a respectable household Youve gone and got my poor innocent boy into trouble It's the like of you thats the ruin of the like of him

DORA So you always say, you old dears But you know better. Bobby came to me I didnt come to him.

GILBEY Would he have gone if you hadnt been there for him to go to? Tell me that You know why he went to you, I suppose

DORA [*charitably*] It was dull for him at home, poor lad, wasn't it?

MRS GILBEY Oh no I'm at home on first Thursdays And we have the Knoxes to dinner every Friday Margaret Knox and Bobby are as good as engaged Mr Knox is my husband's partner Mrs Knox is very religious; but she's quite cheerful We dine with them on Tuesdays So thats two evenings pleasure every week

GILBEY [*almost in tears*] We done what we could for the boy Short of letting him go into temptations of all sorts, he can do what he likes What more does he want?

DORA Well, old dear, he wants me, and thats about the long and short of it And I must say youre not very nice to me about it Ive talked to him like a mother, and tried my best to keep him straight; but I dont deny I like a bit of fun myself, and we both get a bit giddy when we're lighthearted Him and me is a pair, I'm afraid

GILBEY. Dont talk foolishness, girl. How could you and he be a pair, you being what you are, and he brought up as he has been, with the example of a religious woman like Mrs Knox before his eyes? I cant understand how he could bring himself to be seen in the street with you. [*Pitying himself*] I havnt

deserved this I've done my duty as a father. I've kept him sheltered [*Angry with her*] Creatures like you that take advantage of a child's innocence ought to be whipped through the streets

DORA Well, whatever I may be, I'm too much the lady to lose my temper, and I don't think Bobby would like me to tell you what I think of you, for when I start giving people a bit of my mind I sometimes use language that's beneath me. But I tell you once for all I must have the money to get Bobby out, and if you won't fork out, I'll hunt up Holy Joe. He might get it off his brother, the Monsignor

GILBEY You mind your own concerns. My solicitor will do what is right. I'll not have you paying my son's fine as if you were anything to him

DORA That's right. You'll get him out today, won't you?

GILBEY It's likely I'd leave my boy in prison, isn't it?

DORA I'd like to know when they'll let him out

GILBEY You would, would you? You're going to meet him at the prison door

DORA Well, don't you think any woman would that had the feelings of a lady?

GILBEY [*bitterly*] Oh yes I know. Here! I must buy the lad's salvation, I suppose. How much will you take to clear out and let him go?

DORA [*pitying him quite nice about it*] What good would that do, old dear? There are others, you know

GILBEY That's true. I must send the boy himself away

DORA Where to?

GILBEY Anywhere, so long as he's out of the reach of you and your like

DORA Then I'm afraid you'll have to send him out of the world, old dear. I'm sorry for you. I really am, though you mightn't believe it, and I think your feelings do you real credit. But I can't give him up just to let him fall into the hands of people I couldn't trust, can I?

GILBEY [*beside himself, rising*] Wheres the police? Wheres the Government? Wheres the Church? Wheres respectability and right reason? Whats the good of them if I have to stand here and see you put my son in your pocket as if he was a chattel slave, and you hardly out of gaol as a common drunk and

disorderly? Whats the world coming to?

DORA It is a lottery, isn't it, old dear?

Mr Gilbey rushes from the room, distracted
MRS GILBEY [*unruffled*] Where did you buy that white lace? I want some to match a collarlet of my own, and I can't get it at Perry's and John's

DORA Knagg and Pantle's: one and fourpence. It's machine hand-made

MRS GILBEY I never give more than one and tuppence. But I suppose you're extravagant by nature. My sister Martha was just like that. Pay anything she was asked

DORA Whats tuppence to you, Mrs Bobby, after all?

MRS GILBEY [*correcting her*] Mrs Gilbey

DORA Of course, Mrs Gilbey. I am silly

MRS GILBEY Bobby must have looked funny in your hat. Why did you change hats with him?

DORA I don't know. One does, you know

MRS GILBEY I never did. The things people do! I can't understand them. Bobby never told me he was keeping company with you. His own mother!

DORA [*overcome*] Excuse me. I can't help smiling

Juggins enters

JUGGINS Mr Gilbey has gone to Wormwood Scrubs, madam

MRS GILBEY Have you ever been in a police court, Juggins?

JUGGINS Yes, madam

MRS GILBEY [*rather shocked*] I hope you had not been exceeding, Juggins

JUGGINS Yes, madam, I had. I exceeded the legal limit

MRS GILBEY Oh, that! Why do they give a woman a fortnight for wearing a man's hat, and a man a month for wearing hers?

JUGGINS I didn't know that they did, madam

MRS GILBEY It doesn't seem justice, does it Juggins?

JUGGINS No, madam

MRS GILBEY [*to Dora, rising*] Well, goodbye [*Shaking her hand*] So pleased to have made your acquaintance

DORA [*standing up*] Don't mention it. I'm sure it's most kind of you to receive me at all

MRS GILBEY I must go off now and order lunch [*She trots to the door*] What was it you called the concertina?

DORA A squiffer, dear

MRS GILBEY [*thoughtfully*] A squiffer, of course. How funny! [*She goes out*]

DORA [*exploding into ecstasies of mirth*] Oh my! isn't she an old love? How do you keep your face straight?

JUGGINS It is what I am paid for.

DORA [*confidentially*] Listen here, dear boy Your name isn't Juggins Nobody's name is Juggins

JUGGINS My orders are, Miss Delaney, that you are not to be here when Mr Gilbey returns from Wormwood Scrubbs

DORA That means telling me to mind my own business, doesn't it? Well, I'm off Tootle Loo, Charlie Darling [*She kisses her hand to him and goes*]

ACT II

On the afternoon of the same day, Mrs Knox is writing notes in her drawing room, at a writing-table which stands against the wall. Anyone placed so as to see Mrs Knox's left profile will have the door on the right and the window on the left, both further away than Mrs Knox, whose back is presented to an obsolete upright piano at the opposite side of the room. The sofa is near the piano. There is a small table in the middle of the room, with some gilt-edged books and albums on it, and chairs near it

Mr Knox comes in almost furtively, a troubled man of fifty, thinner, harder, and uglier than his partner, Gilbey, Gilbey being a soft stoutish man with white hair and thin smooth skin, whilst Knox has coarse black hair, and blue jaws which no diligence in shaving can whiten. Mrs Knox is a plain woman, dressed without regard to fashion, with thoughtful eyes and thoughtful ways that make an atmosphere of peace and some solemnity. She is surprised to see her husband at home during business hours

MRS KNOX What brings you home at this hour? Have you heard anything?

KNOX No Have you?

MRS KNOX No Whats the matter?

KNOX [*sitting down on the sofa*] I believe Gilbey has found out

MRS KNOX What makes you think that?

KNOX Well, I don't know: I didn't like to tell you. you have enough to worry you without that, but Gilbey's been very queer ever since it happened. I can't keep my mind on business as I ought; and I was depending on him. But he's worse than me. He's not looking after anything, and he keeps out of my way. His manner's not natural. He hasn't

asked us to dinner, and he's never said a word about our not asking him to dinner, after all these years when we've dined every week as regular as clockwork. It looks to me as if Gilbey's trying to drop me socially. Well, why should he do that if he hasn't heard?

MRS KNOX I wonder! Bobby hasn't been near us either: that's what I can't make out

KNOX Oh, that's nothing. I told him Margaret was down in Cornwall with her aunt

MRS KNOX [*reproachfully*] Jo! [*She takes her handkerchief from the writing-table and cries a little*]

KNOX Well, I got to tell lies, ain't I? You won't. Somebody's got to tell 'em

MRS KNOX [*putting away her handkerchief*] It only ends in our not knowing what to believe. Mrs Gilbey told me Bobby was in Brighton for the sea air. There's something queer about that. Gilbey would never let the boy loose by himself among the temptations of a gay place like Brighton without his tutor; and I saw the tutor in Kensington High Street the very day she told me.

KNOX If the Gilbeys have found out, it's all over between Bobby and Margaret, and all over between us and them

MRS KNOX It's all over between us and everybody. When a girl runs away from home like that, people know what to think of her and her parents

KNOX She had a happy, respectable home—everything—

MRS KNOX [*interrupting him*] There's no use going over it all again, Jo. If a girl hasn't happiness in herself, she won't be happy anywhere. You'd better go back to the shop and try to keep your mind off it

KNOX [*rising restlessly*] I can't. I keep fancying everybody knows it and is sniggering about it. I'm at peace nowhere but here. It's a comfort to be with you. It's a torment to be with other people

MRS KNOX [*going to him and drawing her arm through his*] There, Jo, there! I'm sure I'd have you here always if I could. But it can't be. God's work must go on from day to day, no matter what comes. We must face our trouble and bear it.

KNOX [*wandering to the window arm in arm with her*] Just look at the people in the street, going up and down as if nothing had happened. It seems unnatural, as if they all knew and didn't care

MRS KNOX If they knew, Jo, thered be a crowd round the house looking up at us You shouldnt keep thinking about it

KNOX I know I shouldnt. You have your religion, Amelia; and I'm sure I'm glad it comforts you But it doesnt come to me that way Ive worked hard to get a position and be respectable Ive turned many a girl out of the shop for being half an hour late at night, and heres my own daughter gone for a fortnight without word or sign, except a telegram to say she's not dead and that we're not to worry about her

MRS KNOX [*suddenly pointing to the street*] Jo, look!

KNOX Margaret! With a man!

MRS KNOX Run down, Jo, quick Catch her save her

KNOX [*lingering*] She's shaking hands with him she's coming across to the door

MRS KNOX [*energetically*] Do as I tell you Catch the man before he's out of sight

Knox rushes from the room Mrs Knox looks anxiously and excitedly from the window Then she throws up the sash and leans out Margaret Knox comes in, flustered and annoyed She is a strong, springy girl of eighteen, with large nostrils, an audacious chin, and a gaily resolute manner, even peremptory on occasions like the present, when she is annoyed

MARGARET Mother Mother

Mrs Knox draws in her head and confronts her daughter

MRS KNOX [*sternly*] Well, miss?

MARGARET Oh, mother, do go out and stop father making a scene in the street He rushed at him and said "Youre the man who took away my daughter" loud enough for all the people to hear Everybody stopped We shall have a crowd round the house Do do something to stop him

Knox returns with a good-looking young marine officer

MARGARET Oh, Monsieur Duvallet, I'm so sorry—so ashamed Mother this is Monsieur Duvallet, who has been extremely kind to me Monsieur Duvallet my mother [*Duvallet bows*]

KNOX A Frenchman! It only needed this

MARGARET [*much annoyed*] Father do please be commonly civil to a gentleman who has been of the greatest service to me What will he think of us?

DUVALLET [*debonair*] But it's very natural I understand Mr Knox's feelings perfectly.

[*He speaks English better than Knox, having learnt it on both sides of the Atlantic*]

KNOX If Ive made any mistake I'm ready to apologize But I want to know where my daughter has been for the last fortnight.

DUVALLET She has been, I assure you, in a particularly safe place.

KNOX Will you tell me what place? I can judge for myself how safe it was

MARGARET Holloway Gaol Was that safe enough?

KNOX AND MRS KNOX. Holloway Gaol!

KNOX Youve joined the Suffragets!

MARGARET No I wish I had I could have had the same experience in better company Please sit down, Monsieur Duvallet [*She sits between the table and the sofa Mrs Knox, overwhelmed, sits at the other side of the table Knox remains standing in the middle of the room*]

DUVALLET [*sitting down on the sofa*] It was nothing An adventure Nothing

MARGARET [*abdurately*] Drunk and assaulting the police! Forty shillings or a month!

MRS KNOX Margaret! Who accused you of such a thing?

MARGARET The policeman I assaulted

KNOX You mean to say that you did it!

MARGARET. I did I had that satisfaction at all events I knocked two of his teeth out

KNOX And you sit there coolly and tell me this!

MARGARET Well, where do you want me to sit? Whats the use of saying things like that?

KNOX My daughter in Holloway Gaol!

MARGARET All the women in Holloway are somebody's daughters Really, father, you must make up your mind to it. If you had sat in that cell for fourteen days making up your mind to it, you would understand that I'm not in the humor to be gaped at while youre trying to persuade yourself that it can't be real These things really do happen to real people every day, and you read about them in the papers and think it's all right Well, theyve happened to me thats all

KNOX [*feeble-forcible*] But they shouldnt have happened to you Dont you know that?

MARGARET They shouldnt happen to anybody, I suppose But they do [*Rising impatiently*] And really I'd rather go out and assault another policeman and go back to Holloway than keep talking round and round it like this If youre going to turn me out of the house, turn me out the sooner I go the

better

DUVALLET [*rising quickly*] That is impossible, mademoiselle Your father has his position to consider To turn his daughter out of doors would ruin him socially.

KNOX. Oh, you've put her up to that, have you? And where did you come in, may I ask?

DUVALLET I came in at your invitation—at your amiable insistence, in fact, not at my own But you need have no anxiety on my account. I was concerned in the regrettable incident which led to your daughter's incarceration I got a fortnight without the option of a fine on the ridiculous ground that I ought to have struck the policeman with my fist I should have done so with pleasure had I known, but, as it was, I struck him on the ear with my boot—a magnificent *moulnet*, I must say—and was informed that I had been guilty of an act of cowardice, but that for the sake of the *entente cordiale* I should be dealt with leniently Yet Miss Knox, who used her fist, got a month, but with the option of a fine I did not know this until I was released, when my first act was to pay the forty shillings And here we are.

MRS KNOX. You ought to pay the gentleman the fine, Jo

KNOX [*reddening*] Oh, certainly. [*He takes out some money*]

DUVALLET. Oh please! it does not matter [*Knox hands him two sovereigns*] If you insist — [*he pockets them*] Thank you

MARGARET. I'm ever so much obliged to you, Monsieur Duvallet

DUVALLET Can I be of any further assistance, mademoiselle?

MARGARET I think you had better leave us to fight it out, if you don't mind.

DUVALLET Perfectly. Madame [*bow*]—Mademoiselle [*bow*]—Monsieur [*bow*]— [*He goes out*]

MRS KNOX. Don't ring, Jo See the gentleman out yourself

Knox hastily sees Duvallet out Mother and daughter look forlornly at one another without saying a word. Mrs Knox slowly sits down Margaret follows her example. They look at one another again Mr Knox returns

KNOX [*shortly and sternly*] Amelia this is your job [*To Margaret*] I leave you to your mother. I shall have my own say in the matter when I hear what you have to say to her [*He goes out, solemn and offended*]

MARGARET [*with a bitter little laugh*] Just

what the Suffragette said to me in Holloway. He throws the job on you

MRS KNOX [*reproachfully*] Margaret!

MARGARET. You know it's true

MRS KNOX Margaret if you're going to be hardened about it, there's no use my saying anything

MARGARET I'm not hardened, mother. But I can't talk nonsense about it You see, it's all real to me I've suffered it I've been shoved and bullied I've had my arms twisted I've been made scream with pain in other ways I've been flung into a filthy cell with a lot of other poor wretches as if I were a sack of coals being emptied into a cellar. And the only difference between me and the others was that I hit back Yes I did And I did worse I wasn't ladylike I cursed I called names. I heard words that I didn't even know that I knew, coming out of my mouth just as if somebody else had spoken them The policeman repeated them in court. The magistrate said he could hardly believe it The policeman held out his hand with his two teeth in it that I knocked out I said it was all right; that I had heard myself using those words quite distinctly, and that I had taken the good conduct prize for three years running at school The poor old gentleman put me back for the missionary to find out who I was, and to ascertain the state of my mind I wouldn't tell, of course, for your sakes at home here; and I wouldn't say I was sorry, or apologize to the policeman, or compensate him or anything of that sort. I wasn't sorry The one thing that gave me any satisfaction was getting in that smack on his mouth; and I said so So the missionary reported that I seemed hardened and that no doubt I would tell who I was after a day in prison. Then I was sentenced. So now you see I'm not a bit the sort of girl you thought me I'm not a bit the sort of girl I thought myself And I don't know what sort of person you really are, or what sort of person father really is I wonder what he would say or do if he had an angry brute of a policeman twisting his arm with one hand and rushing him along by the nape of his neck with the other. He couldn't whirl his leg like a windmill and knock a policeman down by a glorious kick on the helmet Oh, if they'd all fought as we two fought we'd have beaten them

MRS KNOX But how did it all begin?

MARGARET Oh, I don't know It was boat-

race night, they said

MRS KNOX Boat-race night! But what had you to do with the boat race? You went to the great Salvation Festival at the Albert Hall with your aunt. She put you into the bus that passes the door. What made you get out of the bus?

MARGARET I dont know. The meeting got on my nerves, somehow. It was the singing, I suppose you know. I love singing a good swinging hymn, and I felt it was ridiculous to go home in the bus after we had been singing so wonderfully about climbing up the golden stairs to heaven. I wanted more music—more happiness—more life. I wanted some comrade who felt as I did. I felt exalted. It seemed mean to be afraid of anything after all, what could anyone do to me against my will? I suppose I was a little mad at all events, I got out of the bus at Piccadilly Circus, because there was a lot of light and excitement there. I walked to Leicester Square, and went into a great theatre.

MRS KNOX [*horrified*] A theatre!

MARGARET Yes. Lots of other women were going in alone. I had to pay five shillings.

MRS KNOX [*aghast*] Five shillings!

MARGARET [*apologetically*] It was a lot. It was very stuffy, and I didnt like the people much, because they didnt seem to be enjoying themselves, but the stage was splendid and the music lovely. I saw that Frenchman, Monsieur Duvallet, standing against a barrier, smoking a cigarette. He seemed quite happy, and he was nice and sailorlike. I went and stood beside him, hoping he would speak to me.

MRS KNOX [*gasps*] Margaret!

MARGARET [*continuing*] He did, just as if he had known me for years. We got on together like old friends. He asked me would I have some champagne, and I said it would cost too much, but that I would give anything for a dance. I longed to join the people on the stage and dance with them. One of them was the most beautiful dancer I ever saw. He told me he had come there to see her, and that when it was over we could go somewhere where there was dancing. So we went to a place where there was a band in a gallery and the floor cleared for dancing. Very few people danced. The women only wanted to shew off their dresses, but we danced and danced until a lot of them joined in. We got quite reckless, and we had cham-

pagne after all. I never enjoyed anything so much. But at last it got spoilt by the Oxford and Cambridge students up for the Boat race. They got drunk, and they began to smash things, and the police came in. Then it was quite horrible. The students fought with the police, and the police suddenly got quite brutal, and began to throw everybody downstairs. They attacked the women, who were not doing anything, and treated them just as roughly as they had treated the students. Duvallet got indignant and remonstrated with a policeman, who was shoving a woman though she was going quietly as fast as she could. The policeman flung the woman through the door and then turned on Duvallet. It was then that Duvallet swung his leg like a windmill and knocked the policeman down. And then three policemen rushed at him and carried him out by the arms and legs face downwards. Two more attacked me and gave me a shove to the door. That quite maddened me. I just got in one good bang on the mouth of one of them. All the rest was dreadful. I was rushed through the streets to the police station. They kicked me with their knees, they twisted my arms, they taunted and insulted me, they called me vile names, and I told them what I thought of them, and provoked them to do their worst. Theres one good thing about being hard hurt. It makes you sleep. I slept in that filthy cell with all the other drunks sounder than I should have slept at home. I cant describe how I felt next morning. It was hideous, but the police were quite jolly; and everybody said it was a bit of English fun, and talked about last year's boat-race night when it had been a great deal worse. I was black and blue and sick and wretched. But the strange thing was that I wasnt sorry, and I'm not sorry. And I dont feel that I did anything wrong, really. [*She rises and stretches her arms with a large liberating breath*] Now that it's all over I'm rather proud of it, though I know now that I'm not a lady, but whether thats because we're only shopkeepers, or because nobody's really a lady except when theyre treated like ladies, I dont know. [*She throws herself into a corner of the sofa*]

MRS KNOX [*lost in wonder*] But how could you bring yourself to do it, Margaret? I'm not blaming you. I only want to know. How could you bring yourself to do it?

MARGARET I cant tell you. I dont under-

stand it myself The prayer meeting set me free, somehow. I should never have done it if it were not for the prayer meeting.

MRS KNOX [*deeply horrified*] Oh, dont say such a thing as that I know that prayer can set us free; though you could never understand me when I told you so; but it sets us free for good, not for evil

MARGARET Then I suppose what I did was not evil, or else I was set free for evil as well as good As father says, you cant have anything both ways at once When I was at home and at school I was what you call good, but I wasnt free And when I got free I was what most people would call not good But I see no harm in what I did; though I see plenty in what other people did to me

MRS KNOX I hope you dont think yourself a heroine of romance

MARGARET Oh no [*She sits down again at the table*] I'm a heroine of reality, if you call me a heroine at all. And reality is pretty brutal, pretty filthy, when you come to grips with it. Yet it's glorious all the same It's so real and satisfactory

MRS KNOX I dont like this spirit in you, Margaret I dont like your talking to me in that tone

MARGARET. It's no use, mother I dont care for you and papa any the less; but I shall never get back to the old way of talking again Ive made a sort of descent into hell—

MRS KNOX Margaret! Such a word!

MARGARET You should have heard all the words that were flying round that night You should mix a little with people who dont know any other words But when I said that about a descent into hell I was not swearing. I was in earnest, like a preacher

MRS KNOX A preacher utters them in a reverent tone of voice.

MARGARET. I know the tone that shews they dont mean anything real to him. They usent to mean anything real to me Now hell is as real to me as a turnip; and I suppose I shall always speak of it like that Anyhow, Ive been there, and it seems to me now that nothing is worth doing but redeeming people from it

MRS KNOX They are redeemed already if they choose to believe it

MARGARET Whats the use of that if they dont choose to believe it? You dont believe it yourself, or you wouldnt pay policemen to twist their arms. Whats the good of pre-

tending? Thats all our respectability is, pretending, pretending, pretending. Thank heaven Ive had it knocked out of me once for all!

MRS KNOX [*greatly agitated*] Margaret dont talk like that I cant bear to hear you talking wickedly I can bear to hear the children of this world talking vainly and foolishly in the language of this world But when I hear you justifying your wickedness in the words of grace, it's too horrible it sounds like the devil making fun of religion Ive tried to bring you up to learn the happiness of religion. Ive waited for you to find out that happiness is within ourselves and doesnt come from outward pleasures Ive prayed oftener than you think that you might be enlightened But if all my hopes and all my prayers are to come to this, that you mix up my very words and thoughts with the promptings of the devil, then I dont know what I shall do I dont indeed itll kill me

MARGARET You shouldnt have prayed for me to be enlightened if you didnt want me to be enlightened If the truth were known, I suspect we all want our prayers to be answered only by halves the agreeable halves. Your prayer didnt get answered by halves, mother. Youve got more than you bargained for in the way of enlightenment I shall never be the same again I shall never speak in the old way again Ive been set free from this silly little hole of a house and all its pretences I know now that I am stronger than you and Papa I havnt found that happiness of yours that is within yourself, but Ive found strength For good or evil I am set free, and none of the things that used to hold me can hold me now

Knox comes back, unable to bear his suspense

KNOX How long more are you going to keep me waiting, Amelia? Do you think I'm made of iron? Whats the girl done? What are we going to do?

MRS KNOX She's beyond my control, Jo, and beyond yours I cant even pray for her now, for I dont know rightly what to pray for

KNOX. Dont talk nonsense, woman is this a time for praying? Does anybody know? Thats what we have to consider now If only we can keep it dark, I dont care for anything else.

MARGARET. Dont hope for that, father Mind I'll tell everybody. It ought to be told, It must be told

KNOX Hold your tongue, you young hussy, or go out of my house this instant

MARGARET I'm quite ready. [*She takes her hat and turns to the door*]

KNOX [*throwing himself in front of it*] Here! where are you going?

MRS KNOX [*rising*] You mustnt turn her out, Jo! I'll go with her if she goes

KNOX Who wants to turn her out? But is she going to ruin us? To let everybody know of her disgrace and shame? To tear me down from the position I've made for myself and you by forty years hard struggling?

MARGARET Yes I'm going to tear it all down. It stands between us and every thing. I'll tell everybody

KNOX Magsy, my child dont bring down your father's hairs with sorrow to the grave. Theres only one thing I care about in the world to keep this dark I'm your father I ask you here on my knees—in the dust, so to speak—not to let it out

MARGARET I'll tell everybody

Knox collapses in despair Mrs Knox tries to pray and cannot Margaret stands inflexible.

ACT III

Again in the Gilbeys' dining room. Afternoon. The table is not laid it is draped in its ordinary cloth, with pen and ink, an exercise-book, and school-books on it. Bobby Gilbey is in the arm-chair, crouching over the fire, reading an illustrated paper. He is a pretty youth, of very suburban gentility, strong and manly enough by nature but untrained and unsatisfactory, his parents having imagined that domestic restriction is what they call "bringing up." He has learnt nothing from it except a habit of evading it by deceit.

He gets up to ring the bell, then resumes his crouch. Juggins answers the bell.

BOBBY Juggins

JUGGINS Sir?

BOBBY [*morosely sarcastic*] Sir be blowed!

JUGGINS [*cheerfully*] Not at all, sir

BOBBY I'm a gaol-bird youre a respectable man

JUGGINS That doesnt matter, sir Your father pays me to call you sir, and as I take the money, I keep my part of the bargain

BOBBY Would you call me sir if you wernt paid to do it?

JUGGINS No, sir

BOBBY Ive been talking to Dora about you

JUGGINS Indeed, sir?

BOBBY Yes Dora says your name cant be Juggins, and that you have the manners of a gentleman. I always thought you hadnt any manners. Anyhow, your manners are different from the manners of a gentleman in my set

JUGGINS They would be, sir.

BOBBY You dont feel disposed to be communicative on the subject of Dora's notion, I suppose

JUGGINS No, sir

BOBBY [*throwing his paper on the floor and lifting his knees over the arm of the chair so as to turn towards the footman*] It was part of your bargain that you were to valet me a bit, wasnt it?

JUGGINS Yes, sir.

BOBBY Well, can you tell me the proper way to get out of an engagement to a girl without getting into a row for breach of promise?

JUGGINS No, sir. You cant get out of an engagement without being sued for breach of promise if the lady wishes to be paid for her disappointment

BOBBY But it wouldnt be for her happiness to marry me when I dont really care for her

JUGGINS Women dont always marry for happiness, sir. They often marry because they wish to be married women and not old maids

BOBBY Then what am I to do?

JUGGINS Marry her, sir, or take the consequences

BOBBY [*jumping up*] Well, I wont marry her thats flat. What would you do if you were in my place?

JUGGINS I should tell the young lady that I found I couldnt fulfil my engagement.

BOBBY But youd have to make some excuse, you know. I want to give it a gentlemanly turn to say I'm not worthy of her, or something like that.

JUGGINS. That is not a gentlemanly turn, sir. Quite the contrary

BOBBY I dont see that at all. Do you mean that it's not exactly true?

JUGGINS Not at all, sir

BOBBY I can say that no other girl can ever be to me what she's been. That would be quite true, because our circumstances have been rather exceptional, and she'll imagine I mean I'm fonder of her than I can ever be of anyone else. You see, Juggins, a gentleman has to think of a girl's feelings

JUGGINS If you wish to spare her feelings, sir, you can marry her. If you hurt her feelings by refusing, you had better not try to get credit for considerateness at the same time by pretending to spare them. She won't like it. And it will start an argument, of which you will get the worse.

BOBBY But, you know, I'm not really worthy of her.

JUGGINS Probably she never supposed you were, sir.

BOBBY Oh, I say, Juggins, you are a pessimist

JUGGINS [*preparing to go*] Anything else, sir?

BOBBY [*querulously*] You havnt been much use. [*He wanders disconsolately across the room*] You generally put me up to the correct way of doing things

JUGGINS I assure you, sir, theres no correct way of jilting. It's not correct in itself

BOBBY [*hopefully*] I'll tell you what. I'll say I cant hold her to an engagement with a man whos been in quod. That'll do it. [*He seats himself on the table, relieved and confident*]

JUGGINS. Very dangerous, sir. No woman will deny herself the romantic luxury of self-sacrifice and forgiveness when they take the form of doing something agreeable. She's almost sure to say that your misfortune will draw her closer to you.

BOBBY What a nuisance! I dont know what to do. You know, Juggins, your cool simple-minded way of doing it wouldnt go down in Denmark Hill

JUGGINS I daresay not, sir. No doubt you'd prefer to make it look like an act of self-sacrifice for her sake on your part, or provoke her to break the engagement herself. Both plans have been tried repeatedly, but never with success, as far as my knowledge goes

BOBBY You have a devilish cool way of laying down the law. You know, in my class you have to wrap up things a bit. Denmark Hill isnt Camberwell, you know

JUGGINS. I have noticed, sir, that Denmark Hill thinks that the higher you go in the social scale, the less sincerity is allowed, and that only tramps and riff-raff are quite sincere. Thats a mistake. Tramps are often shameless but theyre never sincere. Swells—if I may use that convenient name for the upper classes—play much more with their cards on the table. If you tell the young lady that you want to jilt her, and she calls you a pig,

the tone of the transaction may leave much to be desired, but it'll be less Camberwellian than if you say youre not worthy

BOBBY. Oh, I cant make you understand, Juggins. The girl isnt a scullery-maid. I want to do it delicately.

JUGGINS A mistake, sir, believe me, if you are not a born artist in that line—Beg pardon, sir, I think I heard the bell. [*He goes out*]

Bobby, much perplexed, shoves his hands into his pockets, and comes off the table, staring disconsolately straight before him, then goes reluctantly to his books, and sits down to write
Juggins returns

JUGGINS [*announcing*] Miss Knox.

Margaret comes in. Juggins withdraws.

MARGARET Still grinding away for that Society of Arts examination, Bobby? You'll never pass

BOBBY [*rising*] No. I was just writing to you

MARGARET What about?

BOBBY Oh, nothing. At least—How are you?

MARGARET [*passing round the other end of the table and putting down on it a copy of Lloyd's Weekly and her purse-bag*] Quite well, thank you. How did you enjoy Brighton?

BOBBY. Brighton! I wasnt at—Oh yes, of course. Oh, pretty well. Is your aunt all right?

MARGARET My aunt! I suppose so. I havent seen her for a month

BOBBY I thought you were down staying with her.

MARGARET. Oh! was that what they told you?

BOBBY. Yes. Why? Wernt you really?

MARGARET No. Ive something to tell you. Sit down and lets be comfortable

She sits on the edge of the table. He sits beside her, and puts his arm wearily round her waist

MARGARET. You neednt do that if you dont like, Bobby. Suppose we get off duty for the day just to see what it's like.

BOBBY Off duty? What do you mean?

MARGARET. You know very well what I mean. Bobby, did you ever care one little scrap for me in that sort of way? Dont funk answering. I dont care a bit for you—that way

BOBBY [*removing his arm rather huffily*] I beg your pardon, I'm sure I thought you did.

MARGARET Well, did you? Come! Dont be mean. Ive owned up. You can put it all on

me if you like; but I dont believe you care any more than I do

BOBBY You mean we've been shoved into it rather by the pars and mars

MARGARET Yes

BOBBY Well, it's not that I dont care for you in fact, no girl can ever be to me exactly what you are, but we've been brought up so much together that it feels more like brother and sister than—well, than the other thing, doesnt it?

MARGARET Just so How did you find out the difference?

BOBBY [*blushing*] Oh, I say!

MARGARET I found out from a Frenchman

BOBBY Oh, I say! [*He comes off the table in his consternation*]

MARGARET Did you learn it from a Frenchwoman? You know you must have learnt it from somebody

BOBBY Not a Frenchwoman She's quite a nice woman But she's been rather unfortunate The daughter of a clergyman

MARGARET [*startled*] Oh, Bobby! That sort of woman!

BOBBY What sort of woman?

MARGARET You dont believe she's really a clergyman's daughter, do you, you silly boy? It's a stock joke

BOBBY Do you mean to say you dont believe me?

MARGARET No I mean to say I dont believe her

BOBBY [*curious and interested, resuming his seat on the table beside her*] What do you know about her? What do you know about all this sort of thing?

MARGARET What sort of thing, Bobby?

BOBBY Well, about life

MARGARET I've lived a lot since I saw you last I wasnt at my aunt's All that time that you were in Brighton, I mean

BOBBY I wasnt at Brighton, Meg I'd better tell you youre bound to find out sooner or later [*He begins his confession humbly, avoiding her gaze*] Meg it's rather awful you'll think me no end of a beast I've been in prison

MARGARET You!

BOBBY Yes, me For being drunk and assaulting the police

MARGARET Do you mean to say that you—oh! this is a let-down for me [*She comes off the table and drops, disconsolate, into a chair at the end of it furthest from the hearth*]

nonny Of course I couldnt hold you to our engagement after that I was writing to you to break it off [*He also descends from the table and makes slowly for the hearth*] You must think me an utter rotter.

MARGARET Oh, has every body been in prison for being drunk and assaulting the police? How long were you in?

BOBBY A fortnight

MARGARET That's what I was in for

nonny What are you talking about? In where?

MARGARET In quod

BOBBY. But I'm serious I'm not rotting Really and truly—

MARGARET What did you do to the copper?

BOBBY Nothing, absolutely nothing He exaggerated grossly I only laughed at him

MARGARET [*jumping up, triumphant*] I've beaten you hollow I knocked out two of his teeth I've got one of them He sold it to me for ten shillings

BOBBY Now please do stop fooling, Meg I tell you I'm not rotting [*He sits down in the armchair, rather sulkily*]

MARGARET [*taking up the copy of Lloyd's Weekly and going to him*] And I tell you I'm not either Look! Heres a report of it The daily papers are no good, but the Sunday papers are splendid [*She sits on the arm of the chair*] See! [*Reading*] "Hardened at Eighteen A quietly dressed, respectable-looking girl who refuses her name"—thats me

BOBBY [*pausing a moment in his perusal*] Do you mean to say that you went on the loose out of pure devilment?

MARGARET I did no harm I went to see a lovely dance I picked up a nice man and went to have a dance myself I cant imagine anything more innocent and more happy All the bad part was done by other people they did it out of pure devilment if you like Anyhow, here we are, two gaolbirds, Bobby disgraced forever Isnt it a relief?

BOBBY [*rising stiffly*] But you know, it's not the same for a girl A man may do things a woman maynt [*He stands on the hearthrug with his back to the fire*]

MARGARET Are you scandalised, Bobby?

BOBBY Well, you cant expect me to approve of it, can you, Meg? I never thought you were that sort of girl

MARGARET [*rising indignantly*] I'm not You mustnt pretend to think that I'm a clergyman's daughter, Bobby

BOBBY I wish you wouldnt chaff about that. Dont forget the row you got into for letting out that you admired Juggins [*she turns her back on him quickly*—a footman! And what about the Frenchman?

MARGARET [*facing him again*] I know nothing about the Frenchman except that he's a very nice fellow and can swing his leg round like the hand of a clock and knock a policeman down with it. He was in Wormwood Scrubbs with you. I was in Holloway.

BOBBY It's all very well to make light of it, Meg, but this is a bit thick, you know.

MARGARET. Do you feel you couldnt marry a woman whos been in prison?

BOBBY [*hastily*] No. I never said that. It might even give a woman a greater claim on a man. Any girl, if she were thoughtless and a bit on, perhaps, might get into a scrape. Anyone who really understood her character could see there was no harm in it. But youre not the larkly sort. At least you usent to be.

MARGARET. I'm not, and I never will be [*She walks straight up to him*]. I didnt do it for a lark, Bob. I did it out of the very depths of my nature. I did it because I'm that sort of person. I did it in one of my religious fits. I'm hardened at eighteen, as they say. So what about the match, now?

BOBBY. Well, I dont think you can fairly hold me to it, Meg. Of course it would be ridiculous for me to set up to be shocked, or anything of that sort. I cant afford to throw stones at anybody, and I dont pretend to. I can understand a lark; I can forgive a slip; as long as it is understood that it is only a lark or a slip. But to go on the loose on principle, to talk about religion in connection with it; to—to—well, Meg, I do find that a bit thick, I must say. I hope youre not in earnest when you talk that way.

MARGARET Bobby: youre no good. No good to me, anyhow.

BOBBY [*huffed*] I'm sorry, Miss Knox.

MARGARET. Goodbye, Mr Gilbey [*She turns on her heel and goes to the other end of the table*]. I suppose you wont introduce me to the clergyman's daughter.

BOBBY. I dont think she'd like it. There are limits, after all [*He sits down at the table, as if to resume work at his books a hint to her to go*].

MARGARET [*on her way to the door*] Ring the bell, Bobby; and tell Juggins to shew me out.

BOBBY [*reddening*] I'm not a cad, Meg.

MARGARET [*coming to the table*] Then do something nice to prevent us feeling mean about this afterwards. You'd better kiss me. You neednt ever do it again.

BOBBY If I'm no good, I dont see what fun it would be for you.

MARGARET. Oh, it'd be no fun. If I wanted what you call fun, I should ask the Frenchman to kiss me—or Juggins.

BOBBY [*rising and retreating to the hearth*] Oh, dont be disgusting, Meg. Dont be low.

MARGARET [*determinedly, preparing to use force*] Now, I'll make you kiss me, just to punish you. [*She seizes his wrist, pulls him off his balance, and gets her arm round his neck*].

BOBBY. No. Stop. Leave go, will you.

Juggins appears at the door

JUGGINS Miss Delaney, sir [*Dora comes in. Juggins goes out. Margaret hastily releases Bobby, and goes to the other side of the room*].

DORA [*through the door, to the departing Juggins*] Well, you are a Juggins to shew me up when theres company. [*To Margaret and Bobby*] It's all right, dear. All right, old man: I'll wait in Juggins's pantry til youre disengaged.

MARGARET Dont you know me?

DORA [*coming to the middle of the room and looking at her very attentively*] Why, it's never No 406!

MARGARET Yes it is.

DORA. Well, I should never have known you out of the uniform. How did you get out? You were doing a month, wernt you?

MARGARET My bloke paid the fine the day he got out himself.

DORA A real gentleman! [*Pointing to Bobby, who is staring open-mouthed*] Look at him! He cant take it in.

BOBBY. I suppose you made her acquaintance in prison, Meg. But when it comes to talking about blokes and all that—well!

MARGARET Oh, Ive learnt the language, and I like it. It's another barrier broken down.

BOBBY. It's not so much the language, Meg. But I think [*he looks at Dora and stops*].

MARGARET [*suddenly, dangerous*] What do you think, Bobby?

DORA He thinks you oughtnt to be so free with me, dearie. It does him credit. He always was a gentleman, you know.

MARGARET Does him credit! To insult you like that! Bobby. say that that wasnt what you meant.

NONNY I didnt say it was

MARGARET Well, deny that it was

NONNY No I wouldnt have said it in front of Dora, but I do think it's not quite the same thing my knowing her and you knowing her

DORA Of course it isnt, old man [*To Margaret*] I'll just trot off and come back in half an hour. You two can make it up together. I'm really not fit company for you, dearie. I couldnt live up to you [*She turns to go*]

MARGARET Stop. Do you believe he could live up to me?

DORA Well, I'll never say anything to stand between a girl and a respectable marriage, or to stop a decent lad from settling himself. I have a conscience, though I maynt be as particular as some

MARGARET You seem to me to be a very decent sort, and Bobby's behaving like a skunk

BOBBY [*much ruffled*] Nice language that!

DORA Well, dearie, men have to do some awfully mean things to keep up their respectability. But you cant blame them for that, can you? I've met Bobby walking with his mother; and of course he cut me dead. I wont pretend I liked it, but what could he do, poor dear?

MARGARET And now he wants me to cut you dead to keep him in countenance. Well, I shant not if my whole family were there. But I'll cut him dead if he doesnt treat you properly [*To Bobby, with a threatening move in his direction*] I'll educate you, you young beast

BOBBY [*furiously, meeting her half way*] Who are you calling a young beast?

MARGARET You

DORA [*peacemaking*] Now, dearies!

BOBBY If you dont take care, youll get your fat head jolly well clouted

MARGARET If you dont take care, the policeman's tooth will be the beginning of a collection.

DORA Now, loveys, be good

Bobby, lost to all sense of adult dignity, puts out his tongue at Margaret. Margaret, equally furious, catches his protended countenance a box on the cheek. He hurls himself on her. They wrestle

BOBBY Cat! I'll teach you

MARGARET Pig! Beast! [*She forces him backward on the table*] Now where are you?

DORA [*calling*] Juggins, Juggins. Theyll murder one another.

JUGGINS [*throwing open the door, and announcing*] Monsieur Duvallet

Duvallet enters. Sudden cessation of hostilities, and dead silence. The combatants separate by the whole width of the room. Juggins not draws.

DUVALLET I fear I derange you

MARGARET. Not at all. Bobby, you real are a beast. Monsieur Duvallet will think I always fighting

DUVALLET. Practising jujitsu or the ne Iceland wrestling. Admirable, Miss. Know. The athletic young Englishwoman is an example to all Europe [*Indicating Bobby*] Your instructor, no doubt. Monsieur— [*he bows*]

NONNY [*bowing awkwardly*] How d'y' do?

MARGARET [*to Bobby*] I'm so sorry, Bobb. I asked Monsieur Duvallet to call for me here, and I forgot to tell you [*Introducing Monsieur Duvallet*]. Miss. Four hundred at seven. Mr. Bobby Gilbey [*Duvallet bows*] really dont know how to explain our relationships. Bobby and I are like brother and sister

DUVALLET. Perfectly. I noticed it.

MARGARET. Bobby and Miss—Miss—

DORA. Delaney, dear [*To Duvallet, bowitchingly*] Darling Dora, to real friends

MARGARET. Bobby and Dora are—are well, not brother and sister

DUVALLET [*with redoubled comprehension*] Perfectly

MARGARET. Bobby has spent the last fortnight in prison. You dont mind, do you?

DUVALLET. No, naturally. I have spent the last fortnight in prison.

The conversation drops. Margaret renews with an effort

MARGARET. Dora has spent the last fortnight in prison.

DUVALLET. Quite so. I felicitate Made moiselle on her enlargement.

DORA. *Trop merci*, as they say in Boulogne. No call to be stiff with one another, have we?

Juggins comes in.

JUGGINS. Beg pardon, sir. Mr. and Mr. Gilbey are coming up the street.

DORA. Let me absquatulate [*making for the door*]

JUGGINS. If you wish to leave without being seen, you had better step into my pantry and leave afterwards.

DORA. Righto! [*She bursts into song*]

Hide me in the meat safe til the cop goes by. Hum the dear old music as his step draws nigh.

[*She goes out on tiptoe*]

MARGARET I wont stay here if she has to hide I'll keep her company in the pantry [*She follows Dora*]

BOBBY Lets all go We cant have any fun with the Mar here I say, Juggins' you can give us tea in the pantry, cant you?

JUGGINS Certainly, sir.

BOBBY. Right Say nothing to my mother You dont mind, Mr Duovalley, do you?

DUVALLET. I shall be charmed.

BOBBY Right you are Come along [*At the door*] Oh, by the way, Juggins, fetch down that concertina from my room, will you?

JUGGINS. Yes, sir. [*Bobby goes out Duvallet follows him to the door*] You understand, sir, that Miss Knox is a lady absolutely *comme il faut*?

DUVALLET Perfectly. But the other?

JUGGINS The other, sir, may be both charitably and accurately described in your native idiom as a daughter of joy

DUVALLET It is what I thought. These English domestic interiors are very interesting [*He goes out, followed by Juggins*]

Presently Mr and Mrs Gilbey come in They take their accustomed places he on the hearthrug, she at the colder end of the table.

MRS GILBEY. Did you smell scent in the hall, Rob?

GILBEY No, I didnt And I dont want to smell it Dont you go looking for trouble, Maria.

MRS GILBEY [*snuffing up the perfumed atmosphere*] She's been here [*Gilbey rings the bell*] What are you ringing for? Are you going to ask?

GILBEY No, I'm not going to ask. Juggins said this morning he wanted to speak to me If he likes to tell me, let him; but I'm not going to ask; and dont you either. [*Juggins appears at the door*] You said you wanted to say something to me

JUGGINS When it would be convenient to you, sir.

GILBEY Well, what is it?

MRS GILBEY. Oh, Juggins, we're expecting Mr and Mrs Knox to tea.

GILBEY. He knows that [*He sits down Then, to Juggins*] What is it?

JUGGINS [*advancing to the middle of the table*] Would it inconvenience you, sir, if I were to give you a month's notice?

GILBEY [*taken aback*] What! Why? Aint you satisfied?

JUGGINS Perfectly, sir. It is not that I want to better myself, I assure you

GILBEY. Well, what do you want to leave for, then? Do you want to worse yourself?

JUGGINS. No, sir. Ive been well treated in your most comfortable establbhment; and I should be greatly distressed if you or Mrs Gilbey were to interpret my notice as an expression of dissatisfaction

GILBEY [*paternally*] Now you listen to me, Juggins I'm an older man than you Dont you throw out dirty water til you get in fresh. Dont get too big for your boots Youre like all servants nowadays you think youve only to hold up your finger to get the pick of half a dozen jobs But you wont be treated everywhere as youre treated here In bed every night before eleven; hardly a ring at the door except on Mrs Gilbey's day once a month; and no other manservant to interfere with you It may be a bit quiet perhaps, but youre past the age of adventure Take my advice: think over it. You suit me; and I'm prepared to make it suit you if youre dissatisfied—in reason, you know

JUGGINS. I realize my advantages, sir, but Ive private reasons—

GILBEY [*cutting him short angrily and retiring to the hearthrug in dudgeon*] Oh, I know. Very well go The sooner the better

MRS GILBEY Oh, not until we're suited He must stay his month

GILBEY [*sarcastic*] Do you want to lose him his character, Maria? Do you think I dont see what it is? We're prison folk now. Weve been in the police court [*To Juggins*] Well, I suppose you know your own business best. I take your notice you can go when your month is up, or sooner, if you like.

JUGGINS. Believe me, sir—

GILBEY. Thats enough I dont want any excuses I dont blame you You can go downstairs now, if youve nothing else to trouble me about

JUGGINS. I really cant leave it at that, sir. I assure you Ive no objection to young Mr Gilbey's going to prison. You may do six months yourself, sir, and welcome, without a word of remonstrance from me I'm leaving solely because my brother, who has suffered a hereavement, and feels lonely, begs me to spend a few months with him until he gets over it

GILBEY And is he to keep you all that time? or are you to spend your savings in com-

forting him? Have some sense, man how can you afford such things?

JUGGINS My brother can afford to keep me, sir The truth is, he objects to my being in service

GILBEY Is that any reason why you should be dependent on him? Dont do it, Juggins pay your own way like an honest lad, and dont eat your brother's bread while youre able to earn your own

JUGGINS There is sound sense in that, sir But unfortunately it is a tradition in my family that the younger brothers should sponge to a considerable extent on the eldest

GILBEY Then the sooner that tradition is broken, the better, my man

JUGGINS A Radical sentiment, sir But an excellent one

GILBEY Radical! What do you mean? Dont you begin to take liberties, Juggins, now that you know we're loth to part with you Your brother isnt a duke, you know

JUGGINS Unfortunately, he is, sir

GILBEY } together { What!
MRS GILBEY } { Juggins!

JUGGINS Excuse me, sir the bell [*He goes out*]

GILBEY [*overwhelmed*] Maria did you understand him to say his brother was a duke?

MRS GILBEY Fancy his condescending! Perhaps if youd offer to raise his wages and treat him as one of the family, he'd stay

GILBEY And have my own servant above me! Not me Whats the world coming to? Heres Bobby and—

JUGGINS [*entering and announcing*] Mr and Mrs Knox

The Knozes come in Juggins takes two chairs from the wall and places them at the table, between the host and hostess Then he withdraws.

MRS GILBEY [*to Mrs Knox*] How are you, dear?

MRS KNOX Nicely, thank you Good evening, Mr Gilbey [*They shake hands, and she takes the chair nearest Mrs Gilbey Mr Knox takes the other chair*]

GILBEY [*sitting down*] I was just saying, Knox, What is the world coming to?

KNOX [*appealing to his wife*] What was I saying myself only this morning?

MRS KNOX This is a strange time I was never one to talk about the end of the world, but look at the things that have happened!

KNOX Earthquakes!

GILBEY San Francisco!

MRS GILBEY. Jamaica!

KNOX Martinique!

GILBEY Messina!

MRS GILBEY The plague in China!

MRS KNOX. The floods in France!

GILBEY My Bobby in Wormwood Scrubs!

KNOX Margaret in Holloway!

GILBEY And now my footman tells me his brother's a duke!

KNOX } {No!

MRS KNOX. } {Whats that?

GILBEY Just before he let you in A duke! Here has everything been respectable from the beginning of the world, as you may say, to the present day, and all of a sudden everything is turned upside down

MRS KNOX It's like in the book of Revelations But I do say that when people have happiness within themselves, all the earthquakes, all the floods, and all the prisons in the world cant make them really unhappy

KNOX It isnt alone the curious things that are happening, but the unnatural way people are taking them Why, theres Margaret been in prison, and she hasnt time to go to all the invitations she's had from people that never asked her before

GILBEY I never knew we could live without being respectable

MRS GILBEY Oh, Rob, what a thing to say! Who says we're not respectable?

GILBEY Well, it's not what I call respectable to have your children in and out of jail

KNOX Oh come, Gilbey! we're not tramps because weve had, as it were, an accident

GILBEY It's no use, Knox look it in the face Did I ever tell you my father drank?

KNOX No But I knew it Simmons told me

GILBEY Yes he never could keep his mouth quiet he told me your aunt was a kleptomaniac.

MRS KNOX It wasnt true, Mr Gilbey She used to pick up handkerchiefs if she saw them lying about, but you might trust her with untold silver

GILBEY My Uncle Phil was a teetotaler My father used to say to me Rob, he says, dont you ever have a weakness If you find one getting a hold on you, make a merit of it, he says Your Uncle Phil doesnt like spirits, and he makes a merit of it, and is chairman of the Blue Ribbon Committee I do like spirits, and I make a merit of it, and I'm the King Cockatoo of the Convivial Cockatoos Never put yourself in the wrong,

he says I used to boast about what a good boy Bobby was Now I swank about what a dog he is; and it pleases people just as well. What a world it is!

KNOX. It turned my blood cold at first to hear Margaret telling people about Hollo-way; but it goes down better than her singing used to

MRS KNOX I never thought she sang right after all those lessons we paid for.

GILBEY Lord, Knox, it was lucky you and me got let in together I tell you straight, if it hadnt been for Bobby's disgrace, I'd have broke up the firm

KNOX I shouldnt have blamed you I'd have done the same only for Margaret Too much straitlacedness narrows a man's mind Talking of that, what about those hygienic corset advertisements that Vines & Jackson want us to put in the window? I told Vines they werent decent and we couldnt shew them in our shop I was pretty high with him. But what am I to say to him now if he comes and throws this business in our teeth?

GILBEY Oh, put em in We may as well go it a bit now.

MRS GILBEY Youve been going it quite far enough, Rob [*To Mrs Knox*] He wont get up in the mornings now he that was always out of bed at seven to the tick!

MRS KNOX You hear that, Jo? [*To Mrs Gilbey*] He's taken to whisky and soda. A pint a week! And the beer the same as before!

KNOX Oh, dont preach, old girl

MRS KNOX [*to Mrs Gilbey*] Thats a new name he's got for me [*To Knox*] I tell you, Jo, this doesnt sit well on you You may call it preaching if you like, but it's the truth for all that I say that if youve happiness within yourself, you dont need to seek it outside, spending money on drink and theatres and bad company, and being miserable after all You can sit at home and be happy; and you can work and be happy. If you have that in you, the spirit will set you free to do what you want and guide you to do right But if you havnt got it, then youd best be respectable and stick to the ways that are marked out for you, for youve nothing else to keep you straight

KNOX [*angrily*] And is a man never to have a bit of fun? See whats come of it with your daughter! She was to be content with your happiness that youre always talking about, and how did the spirit guide her? To a

month's hard for being drunk and assaulting the police Did I ever assault the police?

MRS KNOX You wouldnt have the courage. I dont blame the girl

MRS GILBEY. } Oh, Maria! What are you saying?

GILBEY } What! And you so pious!

MRS KNOX She went where the spirit guided her. And what harm there was in it she knew nothing about

GILBEY. Oh, come, Mrs Knox! Girls are not so innocent as all that

MRS KNOX. I dont say she was ignorant. But I do say that she didnt know what we know I mean the way certain temptations get a sudden hold that no goodness nor self-control is any use against She was saved from that, and had a rough lesson too; and I say it was no earthly protection that did that But dont think, you two men, that you'll be protected if you make what she did an excuse to go and do as you'd like to do if it wasnt for the fear of losing your characters. The spirit wont guide you, because it isnt in you; and it never has been not in either of you

GILBEY [*with ironic humility*] I'm sure I'm obliged to you for your good opinion, Mrs Knox

MRS KNOX Well, I will say for you, Mr Gilbey, that youre better than my man here. He's a bitter hard heathen, is my Jo, God help me! [*She begins to cry quietly*].

KNOX Now, dont take on like that, Amelia. You know I always gave in to you that you were right about religion But one of us had to think of other things, or we'd have starved, we and the child

MRS KNOX How do you know youd have starved? All the other things might have been added unto you

GILBEY Come, Mrs Knox, dont tell me Knox is a sinner I know better. I'm sure youd be the first to be sorry if anything was to happen to him

KNOX [*bitterly to his wife*] Youve always had some grudge against me; and nobody but yourself can understand what it is

MRS KNOX I wanted a man who had that happiness within himself You made me think you had it; but it was nothing but being in love with me

MRS GILBEY. And do you blame him for that?

MRS KNOX I blame nobody. But let him

not think he can walk by his own light I tell him that if he gives up being respectable he'll go right down to the bottom of the hill He has no powers inside himself to keep him steady, so let him cling to the powers outside him.

KNOX [*rising angrily*] Who wants to give up being respectable? All this for a pint of whisky that lasted a week! How long would it have lasted Simmons, I wonder?

MRS KNOX [*gently*] Oh, well, say no more, Jo I wont plague you about it. [*He sits down*] You never did understand, and you never will Hardly anybody understands: even Margaret didnt til she went to prison She does now, and I shall have a companion in the house after all these lonely years

KNOX [*beginning to cry*] I did all I could to make you happy I never said a harsh word to you

GILBEY [*rising indignantly*] What right have you to treat a man like that? an honest respectable husband? as if he were dirt under your feet?

KNOX Let her alone, Gilbey [*Gilbey sits down, but mutinously*]

MRS KNOX. Well, you gave me all you could, Jo; and if it wasnt what I wanted, that wasnt your fault. But I'd rather have you as you were than since you took to whisky and soda

KNOX I dont want any whisky and soda. I'll take the pledge if you like

MRS KNOX No you shall have your beer because you like it. The whisky was only brag And if you and me are to remain friends, Mr Gilbey, youll get up tomorrow morning at seven

GILBEY [*defiantly*] Damme if I will! There!

MRS KNOX [*with gentle pity*] How do you know, Mr Gilbey, what youll do tomorrow morning?

GILBEY Why shouldnt I know? Are we children not to be let do what we like, and our own sons and daughters kicking their heels all over the place? [*To Knox*] I was never one to interfere between man and wife, Knox, but if Maria started ordering me about like that—

MRS GILBEY Now dont be naughty, Rob You know you mustnt set yourself up against religion?

GILBEY Whos setting himself up against religion?

MRS KNOX It doesnt matter whether you set yourself up against it or not, Mr Gilbey

If it sets itself up against you, youll have to go the appointed way it's no use quarrelling about it with me that am as great a sinner as yourself

GILBEY. Oh, indeed! And who told you I was a sinner?

MRS GILBEY. Now, Rob, you know we are all sinners What else is religion?

GILBEY I say nothing against religion I suppose we're all sinners, in a manner of speaking, but I dont like to have it thrown at me as if I'd really done anything

MRS GILBEY Mrs Knox is speaking for your good, Rob

GILBEY. Well, I dont like to be spoken to for my good Would anybody like it?

MRS KNOX Dont take offence where none is meant, Mr Gilbey. Talk about something else No good ever comes of arguing about such things among the like of us

KNOX The like of us! Are you throwing it in our teeth that your people were in the wholesale and thought Knox and Gilbey wasnt good enough for you?

MRS KNOX No, Jo you know I'm not. What better were my people than yours, for all their pride? But Ive noticed it all my life we're ignorant We dont really know whats right and whats wrong We're all right as long as things go on the way they always did We bring our children up just as we were brought up, and we go to church or chapel just as our parents did, and we say what everybody says, and it goes on all right until something out of the way happens theres a family quarrel, or one of the children goes wrong, or a father takes to drink, or an aunt goes mad, or one of us finds ourselves doing something we never thought we'd want to do And then you know what happens complaints and quarrels and huff and offence and bad language and bad temper and regular bewilderment as if Satan possessed us all We find out then that with all our respectability and piety, weve no real religion and no way of telling right from wrong Weve nothing but our habits, and when theyre upset, where are we? Just like Peter in the storm trying to walk on the water and finding he couldnt.

MRS GILBEY [*piously*] Ay! He found out, didnt he?

GILBEY [*reverently*] I never denied that youve a great intellect, Mrs Knox—

MRS KNOX Oh, get along with you, Gilbey,

if you begin talking about my intellect. Give us some tea, Maria I've said my say; and I'm sure I beg the company's pardon for being so long about it, and so disagreeable

MRS GILBEY. Ring, Rob [*Gilbey rings*] Stop Juggins will think we're ringing for him.

GILBEY [*appalled*] It's too late. I rang before I thought of it.

MRS GILBEY Step down and apologize, Rob

KNOX Is it him that you said was brother to a—

Juggins comes in with the tea-tray. All rise He takes the tray to Mrs Gilbey

GILBEY I didn't mean to ask you to do this, Mr Juggins I wasn't thinking when I rang

MRS GILBEY [*trying to take the tray from him*] Let me, Juggins

JUGGINS. Please sit down, madam Allow me to discharge my duties just as usual, sir. I assure you that is the correct thing [*They sit down, ill at ease, whilst he places the tray on the table He then goes out for the curate*]

KNOX [*lowering his voice*] Is this all right, Gilbey? Anybody may be the son of a duke, you know Is he legitimate?

GILBEY. Good Lord! I never thought of that

Juggins returns with the cakes They regard him with suspicion

GILBEY [*whispering to Knox*] You ask him

KNOX [*to Juggins*] Just a word with you, my man Was your mother married to your father?

JUGGINS I believe so, sir I can't say from personal knowledge It was before my time

GILBEY Well but look here you know— [*he hesitates*]

JUGGINS. Yes, sir?

KNOX. I know what'll clinch it, Gilbey. You leave it to me [*To Juggins*] Was your mother the duchess?

JUGGINS Yes, sir. Quite correct, sir, I assure you [*To Mrs Gilbey*] That is the milk, madam [*She has mistaken the jugs*]. This is the water.

They stare at him in pitiable embarrassment

MRS KNOX What did I tell you? Here's something out of the common happening with a servant, and we none of us know how to behave

JUGGINS It's quite simple, madam. I'm a footman, and should be treated as a footman. [*He proceeds calmly with his duties, handing round cups of tea as Mrs Knox fills them*]

Shrieks of laughter from below stairs reach the ears of the company

MRS GILBEY. What's that noise? Is Master Bobby at home? I heard his laugh.

MRS KNOX I'm sure I heard Margaret's

GILBEY. Not a bit of it It was that woman

JUGGINS I can explain, sir I must ask you to excuse the liberty; but I'm entertaining a small party to tea in my pantry.

MRS GILBEY But you're not entertaining Master Bobby?

JUGGINS Yes, madam.

GILBEY Whos with him?

JUGGINS Miss Knox, sir.

GILBEY. Miss Knox! Are you sure? Is there anyone else?

JUGGINS Only a French marine officer, sir, and—er—Miss Delaney [*He places Gilbey's tea on the table before him*] The lady that called about Master Bobby, sir

KNOX Do you mean to say they're having a party all to themselves downstairs, and we having a party up here and knowing nothing about it?

JUGGINS. Yes, sir. I have to do a good deal of entertaining in the pantry for Master Bobby, sir.

GILBEY. Well, this is a nice state of things!

KNOX What's the meaning of it? What do they do it for?

JUGGINS To enjoy themselves, sir, I should think.

MRS GILBEY. Enjoy themselves! Did ever anybody hear of such a thing?

GILBEY. Knox's daughter shewn into my pantry!

KNOX. Margaret mixing with a Frenchman and a footman—[*Suddenly realizing that the footman is offering him cake*] She doesn't know about—about His Grace, you know

MRS GILBEY Perhaps she does Does she, Mr Juggins?

JUGGINS The other lady suspects me, madam They call me Rudolph, or the Long Lost Heir.

MRS GILBEY It's a much nicer name than Juggins I think I'll call you by it, if you don't mind

JUGGINS Not at all, madam ;

Roars of merriment from below

GILBEY Go and tell them to stop laughing. What right have they to make a noise like that?

JUGGINS. I asked them not to laugh so loudly, sir. But the French gentleman always

sets them off again.

KNOX Do you mean to tell me that my daughter laughs at a Frenchman's jokes?

GILBEY. We all know what French jokes are

JUGGINS Believe me, you do not, sir The noise this afternoon has all been because the Frenchman said that the cat had whooping cough

MRS GILBEY [*laughing heartily*] Well, I never!

GILBEY Dont be a fool, Maria Look here, Knox we cant let this go on People cant be allowed to behave like this

KNOX Just what I say

A concertina adds its music to the revelry

MRS GILBEY [*excited*] Thats the squiffer He's bought it for her

GILBEY Well, of all the scandalous—
[*Redoubled laughter from below*]

KNOX I'll put a stop to this [*He goes out to the landing and shouts*] Margaret! [*Sudden dead silence*] Margaret, I say!

MARGARET'S VOICE Yes, father Shall we all come up? We're dying to

KNOX. Come up and be ashamed of yourselves, behaving like wild Indians

DORA'S VOICE [*screaming*] Oh! oh! oh! Dont, Bobby Now—Oh! [*In headlong flight she dashes into and right across the room, breathless, and slightly abashed by the company*] I beg your pardon, Mrs Gilbey, for coming in like that, but whenever I go upstairs in front of Bobby, he pretends it's a cat biting my ankles, and I just must scream.

Bobby and Margaret enter rather more shyly, but evidently in high spirits Bobby places himself near his father, on the hearthrug, and presently slips down into the armchair

MARGARET How do you do, Mrs Gilbey?
[*She puts herself behind her mother*]

Duvallet comes in behaving himself perfectly Knox follows

MARGARET Oh—let me introduce My friend Lieutenant Duvallet Mrs Gilbey Mr Gilbey

Duvallet bows and sits down on Mr Knox's left, Juggins placing a chair for him

DORA Now, Bobby introduce me theres a dear

BOBBY [*a little nervous about it, but trying to keep up his spirits*] Miss Delaney Mr and Mrs Knox [*Knox, as he resumes his seat, acknowledges the introduction suspiciously Mrs Knox bows gravely, looking keenly at Dora and taking her measure without prejudice*]

DORA Pleased to meet you [*Juggins places the baby rocking-chair for her on Gilbey's right, opposite the Knoxs*] Thank you [*She sits*] Bobby's given me the squiffer Do you know what they've been doing downstairs? Youd never guess They've been trying to teach me table manners The Lieutenant and Rudolph say I'm a regular pig I'm sure I never knew there was anything wrong with me But live and learn [*To Gilbey*] Eh, old dear?

JUGGINS Old dear is not correct, Miss Delaney [*He retires to the end of the sideboard nearest the door*]

DORA Oh get out! I must call a man something He doesnt mind do you, Charlie?

MRS GILBEY His name isnt Charlie

DORA Excuse me I call everybody Charlie

JUGGINS You mustnt.

DORA Oh, if I were to mind you, I should have to hold my tongue altogether, and then how sorry you'd be! Lord, how I do run on! Dont mind me, Mrs Gilbey

KNOX What I want to know is, whats to be the end of this? It's not for me to interfere between you and your son, Gilbey he knows his own intentions best, no doubt, and perhaps has told them to you But Ive my daughter to look after, and it's my duty as a parent to have a clear understanding about her No good is ever done by beating about the bush I ask Lieutenant—well, I dont speak French, and I cant pronounce the name—

MARGARET Mr Duvallet, father

KNOX I ask Mr Duvalley what his intentions are

MARGARET Oh father how can you?

DUVALLET I'm afraid my knowledge of English is not enough to understand Intentions? How?

MARGARET He wants to know will you marry me

MRS GILBEY } What a thing to say!

KNOX } Silence, miss

DORA } Well, thats straight, aint it?

DUVALLET But I am married already. I have two daughters

KNOX [*rising, virtuously indignant*] You sit there after carrying on with my daughter, and tell me coolly youre married

MARGARET Papa you really must not tell people that they sit there [*He sits down again sulkily*]

DUVALLET Pardon Carrying on? What does that mean?

MARGARET It means—

KNOX [*violently*] Hold your tongue, you shameless young hussy. Dont you dare say what it means

DUVALLET [*shrugging his shoulders*] What does it mean, Rudolph?

MRS KNOX If it's not proper for her to say, it's not proper for a man to say, either Mr Doovolley youre a married man with daughters Would you let them go about with a stranger, as you are to us, without wanting to know whether he intended to behave honorably?

DUVALLET Ah, madam, my daughters are French girls That is very different It would not be correct for a French girl to go about alone and speak to men as English and American girls do That is why I so immensely admire the English people You are so free—so unprejudiced—your women are so brave and frank—their minds are so—how do you say?—wholesome I intend to have my daughters educated in England Nowhere else in the world but in England could I have met at a Variety Theatre a charming young lady of perfect respectability, and enjoyed a dance with her at a public dancing saloon And where else are women trained to box and knock out the teeth of policemen as a protest against injustice and violence? [*Rising, with immense élan*] Your daughter, madam, is superb Your country is a model to the rest of Europe If you were a Frenchman, stifled in prudery, hypocrisy, and the tyranny of the family and the home, you would understand how an enlightened Frenchman admires and envies your freedom, your broadmindedness, and the fact that home life can hardly be said to exist in England You have made an end of the despotism of the parent, the family council is unknown to you; everywhere in these islands one can enjoy the exhilarating, the soul-liberating spectacle of men quarrelling with their brothers, defying their fathers, refusing to speak to their mothers In France we are not men we are only sons—grown-up children Here one is a human being—an end in himself Oh, Mrs Knox, if only your military genius were equal to your moral genius—if that conquest of Europe by France which inaugurated the new age after the Revolution had only been an English conquest, how much more enlightened the world would have been now! We, alas, can only

fight France is unconquerable We impose our narrow ideas, our prejudices, our obsolete institutions, our insufferable pedantry on the world by brute force—by that stupid quality of military heroism which shews how little we have evolved from the savage. nay, from the beast We can charge like bulls, we can spring on our foes like gamecocks; when we are overpowered by treason, we can die fighting like rats And we are foolish enough to be proud of it! Why should we be? Does the bull progress? Can you civilize the gamecock? Is there any future for the rat? We never fight intelligently when we lose battles, it is because we have not sense enough to know when we are beaten At Waterloo, had we known when we were beaten, we should have retreated, tried another plan, and won the battle But no we were too pigheaded to admit that there is anything impossible to a Frenchman. we were quite satisfied when our Marshals had six horses shot under them, and our stupid old grognards died fighting rather than surrender like reasonable beings Think of your great Wellington think of his inspiring words, when the lady asked him whether British soldiers ever ran away "All soldiers run away, madam," he said; "but if there are supports for them to fall back on it does not matter" Think of your illustrious Nelson, always beaten on land, always victorious at sea, where his men could not run away You are not dazzled and misled by false ideals of patriotic enthusiasm your honest and sensible statesmen demand for England a two-power standard, even a three-power standard, frankly admitting that it is wise to fight three to one whilst we, fools and braggarts as we are, declare that every Frenchman is a host in himself, and that when one Frenchman attacks three Englishmen he is guilty of an act of cowardice comparable to that of the man who strikes a woman It is folly: it is nonsense a Frenchman is not really stronger than a German, than an Italian, even than an Englishman Sir: if all Frenchwomen were like your daughter—if all Frenchmen had the good sense, the power of seeing things as they really are, the calm judgment, the open mind, the philosophic grasp, the foresight and true courage, which are so natural to you as an Englishman that you are hardly conscious of possessing them, France would become the greatest

nation in the world

MARGARET Three cheers for old England!
[She shakes hands with him warmly]

BOBBY Hurra-a-ay! And so say all of us
Duvallet, having responded to Margaret's handshake with enthusiasm, kisses Juggins on both cheeks, and sinks into his chair, wiping his perspiring brow

GILBEY Well, this sort of talk is above me Can you make anything out of it, Knox?

KNOX The long and short of it seems to be that he can't lawfully marry my daughter, as he ought after going to prison with her

DORA I'm ready to marry Bobby, if that will be any satisfaction

GILBEY No you don't Not if I know it

MRS KNOX He ought to, Mr Gilbey

GILBEY Well, if that's your religion, Amelia Knox, I want no more of it Would you invite them to your house if he married her?

MRS KNOX He ought to marry her whether or no

BOBBY I feel I ought to, Mrs Knox

GILBEY Hold your tongue Mind your own business

BOBBY [mildly] If I'm not let marry her, I'll do something downright disgraceful I'll enlist as a soldier

JUGGINS [sternly] That is not a disgrace, sir.

BOBBY Not for you, perhaps But you're only a footman I'm a gentleman

MRS GILBEY Don't dare to speak disrespectfully to Mr Rudolph, Bobby For shame!

JUGGINS [coming forward to the middle of the table] It is not gentlemanly to regard the service of your country as disgraceful It is gentlemanly to marry the lady you make love to

GILBEY [aghast] My boy is to marry this woman and be a social outcast!

JUGGINS Your boy and Miss Delaney will be inexorably condemned by respectable society to spend the rest of their days in precisely the sort of company they seem to like best and be most at home in

KNOX And my daughter? Whos to marry my daughter?

JUGGINS Your daughter, sir, will probably marry the man she makes up her mind to marry She is a lady of very determined character

KNOX Yes if he'd have her with her character gone But who would? You're the

brother of a duke Would—

BOBBY } { Whats that?
MARGARET } { Juggins a duke!
DUVALLET } { Comment!
DORA. } { What did I tell you?

KNOX Yes the brother of a duke thats what he is [To Juggins] Well, would you marry her?

JUGGINS I was about to propose that solution of your problem, Mr Knox

MRS GILBEY } { Well, I never!

KNOX } { D'ye mean it?

MRS KNOX } { Marry Margaret!

JUGGINS [continuing] As an idle younger son, unable to support myself, or even to remain in the Guards in competition with the grandsons of American millionaires, I could not have aspired to Miss Knox's hand But as a sober, honest, and industrious domestic servant, who has, I trust, given satisfaction to his employer [he bows to Mr Gilbey] I feel I am a man with a character It is for Miss Knox to decide

MARGARET I got into a frightful row once for admiring you, Rudolph

JUGGINS I should have got into an equally frightful row myself, Miss, had I betrayed my admiration for you I looked forward to those weekly dinners

MRS KNOX But why did a gentleman like you stoop to be a footman?

DORA He stooped to conquer

MARGARET Shut up, Dora I want to hear

JUGGINS I will explain, but only Mrs Knox will understand I once insulted a servant. Rashly, for he was a sincere Christian He rebuked me for trifling with a girl of his own class I told him to remember what he was, and to whom he was speaking He said God would remember I discharged him on the spot

GILBEY Very properly

KNOX What right had he to mention such a thing to you?

MRS GILBEY What are servants coming to?

MRS KNOX Did it come true, what he said?

JUGGINS It stuck like a poisoned arrow It rankled for months Then I gave in I apprenticed myself to an old butler of ours who kept a hotel He taught me my present business, and got me a place as footman with Mr Gilbey If ever I meet that man again I shall be able to look him in the face

MRS KNOX Margaret it's not on account of the duke dukes are vanities But take my

advice, and take him

MARGARET [*slipping her arm through his*] I have loved Juggins since the first day I beheld him I felt instinctively he had been in the Guards May he walk out with me, Mr Gilbey?

KNOX. Dont be vulgar, girl Remember your new position [*To Juggins*] I suppose you're serious about this, Mr—Mr Rudolph?

JUGGINS. I propose, with your permission, to begin keeping company this afternoon, if Mrs Gilbey can spare me

GILBEY [*in a gust of envy, to Bobby*] It'll be long enough before you'll marry the sister of a duke, you young good-for-nothing

DORA. Dont fret, old dear Rudolph will teach me high-class manners I call it quite a happy ending dont you, lieutenant?

DUVALLET In France it would be impossible But here—ah! [*kissing his hand*] la belle Angleterre!

EPILOGUE

Before the curtain The Count, dazed and agitated, hurries to the 4 critics, as they rise, bored and weary, from their seats

THE COUNT Gentlemen do not speak to me I implore you to withhold your opinion I am not strong enough to bear it I could never have believed it Is this a play? Is this in any sense of the word, Art? Is it agreeable? Can it conceivably do good to any human being? Is it delicate? Do such people really exist? Excuse me, gentlemen I speak from a wounded heart There are private reasons for my discomposure This play implies obscure, unjust, unkind reproaches and menaces to all of us who are parents

TROTTER. Pooh! you take it too seriously. After all, the thing has amusing passages Dismiss the rest as impertinence

THE COUNT. Mr Trotter. it is easy for you to play the pococurantist [*Trotter, amazed, repeats the first three syllables in his throat, making a noise like a pheasant*] You see hundreds of plays every year But to me, who have never seen anything of this kind before, the effect of this play is terribly disquieting Sir if it had been what people call an immoral play, I shouldnt have minded a bit [*Vaughan is shocked*] Love beautifies every romance and justifies every audacity [*Bannal assents gravely*] But there are reticences which everybody should respect. There are decencies too subtle to be put into words, without which

human society would be unbearable People could not talk to one another as those people talk No child could speak to its parent. no girl could speak to a youth: no human creature could tear down the veils—[*Appealing to Vaughan, who is on his left flank, with Gunn between them*] Could they, sir?

VAUGHAN Well, I dont see that

THE COUNT You dont see it! dont feel it! [*To Gunn*] Sir I appeal to you

GUNN [*with studied nearness*] It seems to me the most ordinary sort of old-fashioned Ibsenite drivel

THE COUNT [*turning to Trotter, who is on his right, between him and Bannal*] Mr Trotter. will you tell me that you are not amazed, outraged, revolted, wounded in your deepest and holiest feelings by every word of this play, every tone, every implication, that you did not sit there shrinking in every fibre at the thought of what might come next?

TROTTER Not a bit Any clever modern girl could turn out that kind of thing by the yard

THE COUNT Then, sir, tomorrow I start for Venice, never to return I must believe what you tell me I perceive that you are not agitated, not surprised, not concerned, that my own horror (yes, gentlemen, horror—horror of the very soul) appears unaccountable to you, ludicrous, absurd, even to you, Mr Trotter, who are little younger than myself Sir if young people spoke to me like that, I should die of shame. I could not face it I must go back The world has passed me by and left me. Accept the apologies of an elderly and no doubt ridiculous admirer of the art of a bygone day, when there was still some beauty in the world and some delicate grace in family life But I promised my daughter your opinion; and I must keep my word. Gentlemen you are the choice and master spirits of this age. you walk through it without bewilderment and face its strange products without dismay. Pray deliver your verdict Mr Bannal: you know that it is the custom at a Court Martial for the youngest officer present to deliver his judgment first; so that he may not be influenced by the authority of his elders You are the youngest What is your opinion of the play?

BANNAL Well, whos it by?

THE COUNT. That is a secret for the present

BANNAL. You dont expect me to know what to say about a play when I dont know who

the author is, do you?

THE COUNT Why not?

BANNAL Why not! Why not! Suppose you had to write about a play by Pinero and one by Jones! Would you say exactly the same thing about them?

THE COUNT I presume not

BANNAL Then how could you write about them until you knew which was Pinero and which was Jones? Besides, what sort of play is this? That's what I want to know. Is it a comedy or a tragedy? Is it a farce or a melodrama? Is it repertory theatre tosh, or really straight paying stuff?

GUNN Cant you tell from seeing it?

BANNAL I can see it all right enough, but how am I to know how to take it? Is it serious, or is it spoof? If the author knows what his play is, let him tell us what it is. If he doesnt, he cant complain if I dont know either. I'm not the author.

THE COUNT But is it a good play, Mr Bannal? That's a simple question.

BANNAL Simple enough when you know. If it's by a good author, it's a good play, naturally. That stands to reason. Who is the author? Tell me that, and I'll place the play for you to a hair's breadth.

THE COUNT I'm sorry I'm not at liberty to divulge the author's name. The author desires that the play should be judged on its merits.

BANNAL But what merits can it have except the author's merits? Who would you say it's by, Gunn?

GUNN Well, who do you think? Here you have a rotten old-fashioned domestic melodrama acted by the usual stage puppets. The hero's a naval lieutenant. All melodramatic heroes are naval lieutenants. The heroine gets into trouble by defying the law (if she didnt get into trouble, there'd be no drama) and plays for sympathy all the time as hard as she can. Her good old pious mother turns on her cruel father when he's going to put her out of the house, and says she'll go too. Then theres the comic relief the comic shopkeeper, the comic shopkeeper's wife, the comic footman who turns out to be a duke in disguise, and the young scapegrace who gives the author his excuse for dragging in a fast young woman. All as old and stale as a fried fish shop on a winter morning.

THE COUNT But—

GUNN [interrupting him] I know what you're going to say, Count. You're going to say that the whole thing seems to you to be quite new and unusual and original. The naval lieutenant is a Frenchman who cracks up the English and runs down the French the hackneyed old Shaw touch. The characters are second-rate middle class, instead of being dukes and millionaires. The heroine gets kicked through the mud real mud. Theres no plot. All the old stage conventions and puppets without the old ingenuity and the old enjoyment. And a feeble air of intellectual pretentiousness kept up all through to persuade you that if the author hasnt written a good play it's because he's too clever to stoop to anything so commonplace. And you three experienced men have sat through all this, and cant tell me who wrote it! Why, the play bears the author's signature in every line.

BANNAL Who?

GUNN Granville-Barker, of course. Why, old Gilbey is straight out of *The Madras House*.

BANNAL Poor old Barker!

VAUGHAN Utter nonsense! Cant you see the difference in style?

BANNAL No.

VAUGHAN [contemptuously] Do you know what style is?

BANNAL Well, I suppose you'd call Trotter's uniform style. But it's not my style—since you ask me.

VAUGHAN To me it's perfectly plain who wrote that play. To begin with, it's intensely disagreeable. Therefore it's not by Barrie, in spite of the footman, whos cribbed from *The Admirable Crichton*. He was an earl, you may remember. You notice, too, the author's offensive habit of saying silly things that have no real sense in them when you come to examine them, just to set all the fools in the house giggling. Then what does it all come to? An attempt to expose the supposed hypocrisy of the Puritan middle class in England, people just as good as the author, anyhow. With, of course, the inevitable improper female—the Mrs Tanqueray, Iris, and so forth. Well, if you cant recognize the author of that, youve mistaken your profession. That's all I have to say.

BANNAL Why are you so down on Pinero? And what about that touch that Gunn spotted? the Frenchman's long speech. I

believe it's Shaw

GUNN Rubbish!

VAUGHAN Rot! You may put that idea out of your head, Bannal Poor as this play is, theres the note of passion in it You feel somehow that beneath all the assumed levity of that poor waif and stray, she really loves Bobby and will be a good wife to him Now Ive repeatedly proved that Shaw is physiologically incapable of the note of passion

BANNAL Yes, I know Intellect without emotion Thats right. I always say that myself A giant brain, if you ask me; but no heart.

GUNN Oh, shut up, Bannal. This crude medieval psychology of heart and brain—Shakespear would have called it liver and wits—is really schoolboyish Surely weve had enough of second-hand Schopenhauer Even such a played-out old back number as Ibsen would have been ashamed of it Heart and brain, indeed!

VAUGHAN You have neither one nor the other, Gunn Youre dekkadent

GUNN Decādent! How I love that early Victorian word!

VAUGHAN Well, at all events, you cant deny that the characters in this play are quite distinguishable from one another. That proves it's not by Shaw, because all Shaw's characters are himself mere puppets stuck up to spout Shaw It's only the actors that make them seem different

BANNAL There can be no doubt of that everybody knows it. But Shaw doesnt write his plays as plays All he wants to do is to insult everybody all round and set us talking about him

TROTTER [*wearily*] And naturally, here we are all talking about him For heaven's sake, let us change the subject

VAUGHAN Still, my articles about Shaw—

GUNN Oh, stow it, Vaughan Drop it What Ive always told you about Shaw is—

BANNAL There you go, Shaw, Shaw, Shaw! Do chuck it If you want to know my opinion about Shaw—

TROTTER	{	{	No, please, we dont	
VAUGHAN			[<i>yelling</i>]	Shut your head, Bannal
GUNN				Oh do drop it

The deafened Count puts his fingers in his ears and flies from the centre of the group to its outskirts, behind Vaughan

BANNAL [*sulkily*] Oh, very well Sorry I spoke, I'm sure.

TROTTER	{	{	Shaw—	
VAUGHAN			[<i>beginning again</i>]	Shaw—
GUNN			[<i>simultaneously</i>]	Shaw—

They are cut short by the entry of Fanny through the curtains She is almost in tears

FANNY [*coming between Trotter and Gunn*] I'm so sorry, gentlemen And it was such a success when I read it to the Cambridge Fabian Society!

TROTTER Miss O'Dowda I was about to tell these gentlemen what I guessed before the curtain rose: that you are the author of the play [*General amazement and consternation*]

FANNY. And you all think it beastly. You hate it You think I'm a concerted idiot, and that I shall never be able to write anything decent

She is almost weeping A wave of sympathy carries away the critics

VAUGHAN No, no Why, I was just saying that it must have been written by Pinero. Didnt I, Gunn?

FANNY [*enormously flattered*] Really?

TROTTER I thought Pinero was much too popular for the Cambridge Fabian Society

FANNY. Oh yes, of course; but still— Oh, did you really say that, Mr Vaughan?

GUNN I owe you an apology, Miss O'Dowda I said it was by Barker

FANNY [*radiant*] Granville-Barker! Oh, you couldnt really have thought it so fine as that

BANNAL I said Bernard Shaw

FANNY. Oh, of course it would be a little like Bernard Shaw. The Fabian touch, you know.

BANNAL [*coming to her encouragingly*] A jolly good little play, Miss O'Dowda Mind I dont say it's like one of Shakespear's—Hamlet or The Lady of Lyons, you know—but still, a first-rate little bit of work [*He shakes her hand*]

GUNN [*following Bannal's example*] I also, Miss O'Dowda Capital Charming [*He shakes hands*]

VAUGHAN [*with maiden solemnity*] Only be true to yourself, Miss O'Dowda. Keep serious Give up making silly jokes. Sustain the note of passion And you'll do great things.

FANNY. You think I have a future?

TROTTER You have a past, Miss O'Dowda.

FANNY [*looking apprehensively at her father*] Sh-sh-sh!

THE COUNT. A past! What do you mean, Mr Trotter?

TROTTER [*to Fanny*] You cant deceive me That bit about the police was real Youre a Suffraget, Miss O'Dowda You were on that Deputation

THE COUNT Fanny: is this true?

FANNY It is I did a month with Lady Constance Lytton, and I'm prouder of it than I ever was of anything or ever shall be again

TROTTER Is that any reason why you should stuff naughty plays down my throat?

FANNY Yes ill teach you what it feels like to be forcibly fed

THE COUNT She will never return to Venice I feel now as I felt when the Campanile fell

Savoyard comes in through the curtains

SAVOYARD [*to the Count*] Would you mind

coming to say a word of congratulation to the company? Theyre rather upset at having had no curtain call

THE COUNT Certainly, certainly. I'm afraid I've been rather remiss Let us go on the stage, gentlemen

The curtains are drawn, revealing the last scene of the play and the actors on the stage The Count, Savoyard, the critics, and Fanny join them, shaking hands and congratulating

THE COUNT Whatever we may think of the play, gentlemen, I'm sure you will agree with me that there can be only one opinion about the acting

THE CRITICS Hear, hear! [*They start the applause*]

THE END

XXI

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

A FABLE PLAY

PROLOGUE

Overture forest sounds, roaring of lions, Christian hymn faintly

A jungle path A lion's roar, a melancholy suffering roar, comes from the jungle It is repeated nearer The lion limps from the jungle on three legs, holding up his right forepaw, in which a huge thorn sticks He sits down and contemplates it He licks it He shakes it He tries to extract it by scraping it along the ground, and hurts himself worse He roars piteously He licks it again Tears drop from his eyes He limps painfully off the path and lies down under the trees, exhausted with pain Heaving a long sigh, like wind in a trombone, he goes to sleep

Androcles and his wife Megaera come along the path He is a small, thin, ridiculous little man who might be any age from thirty to fifty-five He has sandy hair, watery compassionate blue eyes, sensitive nostrils, and a very presentable forehead, but his good points go no further his arms and legs and back, though wiry of their kind, look shrivelled and starved He carries a big bundle, is very poorly clad, and seems tired and hungry

His wife is a rather handsome pampered slattern, well fed and in the prime of life She has nothing to carry, and has a stout stick to

help her along

MEGAERA [*suddenly throwing down her stick*] I wont go another step

ANDROCLES [*pleading tearfully*] Oh, not again, dear Whats the good of stopping every two miles and saying you wont go another step? We must get on to the next village before night There are wild beasts in this wood lions, they say

MEGAERA I dont believe a word of it You are always threatening me with wild beasts to make me walk the very soul out of my body when I can hardly drag one foot before another We havnt seen a single lion yet

ANDROCLES Well, dear, do you want to see one?

MEGAERA [*tearing the bundle from his back*] You cruel brute, you dont care how tired I am, or what becomes of me [*she throws the bundle on the ground*] always thinking of yourself Self! self! self! always yourself! [*She sits down on the bundle*]

ANDROCLES [*sitting down sadly on the ground with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands*] We all have to think of ourselves occasionally, dear

MEGAERA A man ought to think of his wife sometimes

ANDROCLES He cant always help it, dear. You make me think of you a good deal Not that I blame you

MEGAERA. Blame me! I should think not indeed Is it my fault that I'm married to you?

ANDROCLES No, dear that is my fault

MEGAERA Thats a nice thing to say to me Arnt you happy with me?

ANDROCLES I dont complain, my love

MEGAERA You ought to be ashamed of yourself

ANDROCLES I am, my dear.

MEGAERA Youre not you glory in it

ANDROCLES In what, darling?

MEGAERA In everything In making me a slave, and making yourself a laughing-stock It's not fair. You get me the name of being a shrew with your meek ways, always talking as if butter wouldnt melt in your mouth And just because I look a big strong woman, and because I'm goodhearted and a bit hasty, and because youre always driving me to do things I'm sorry for afterwards, people say "Poor man what a life his wife leads him!" Oh, if they only knew! And you think I dont know But I do, I do, *[screaming]* I do

ANDROCLES Yes, my dear I know you do

MEGAERA Then why dont you treat me properly and be a good husband to me?

ANDROCLES What can I do, my dear?

MEGAERA What can you do! You can return to your duty, and come back to your home and your friends, and sacrifice to the gods as all respectable people do, instead of having us hunted out of house and home for being dirty disreputable blaspheming atheists

ANDROCLES. I'm not an atheist, dear I am a Christian.

MEGAERA. Well, isnt that the same thing, only ten times worse? Everybody knows that the Christians are the very lowest of the low

ANDROCLES Just like us, dear

MEGAERA Speak for yourself. Dont you dare to compare me to common people. My father owned his own public-house, and sorrowful was the day for me when you first came drinking in our bar.

ANDROCLES. I confess I was addicted to it, dear. But I gave it up when I became a Christian

MEGAERA. Youd much better have remained a drunkard I can forgive a man being addicted to drink: it's only natural, and I

dont deny I like a drop myself sometimes What I cant stand is your being addicted to Christianity And whats worse again, your being addicted to animals How is any woman to keep her house clean when you bring in every stray cat and lost cur and lame duck in the whole countryside? You took the bread out of my mouth to feed them you know you did. dont attempt to deny it

ANDROCLES Only when they were hungry and you were getting too stout, dearie

MEGAERA Yes: insult me, do *[Rising]* Oh! I wont bear it another moment You used to sit and talk to those dumb brute beasts for hours, when you hadnt a word for me.

ANDROCLES. They never answered back, darling *[He rises and again shoulders the bundle]*

MEGAERA Well, if youre fonder of animals than of your own wife, you can live with them here in the jungle Ive had enough of them and enough of you I'm going back. I'm going home.

ANDROCLES *[barring the way back]* No, dearie dont take on like that. We cant go back. Weve sold everything we should starve, and I should be sent to Rome and thrown to the lions—

MEGAERA Serve you right! I wish the lions joy of you. *[Screaming]* Are you going to get out of my way and let me go home?

ANDROCLES No, dear—

MEGAERA Then I'll make my way through the forest, and when I'm eaten by the wild beasts youll know what a wife youve lost. *[She dashes into the jungle and nearly falls over the sleeping lion]* Oh! Oh! Andy! Andy! *[She totters back and collapses into the arms of Androcles, who, crushed by her weight, falls on his bundle]*

ANDROCLES *[extracting himself from beneath her and slapping her hands in great anxiety]* What is it, my precious, my pet? Whats the matter? *[He raises her head Speechless with terror, she points in the direction of the sleeping lion He steals cautiously towards the spot indicated by Megaera She rises with an effort and totters after him].*

MEGAERA No, Andy. youll be killed. Come back.

The lion utters a long snoring sigh Androcles sees the lion, and recoils fainting into the arms of Megaera, who falls back on the bundle. They roll apart and lie staring in terror at one another.

The lion is heard groaning heavily in the jungle.

ANDROCLEES [*whispering*] Did you see? A lion

MEGAERA [*despairing*] The gods have sent him to punish us because you're a Christian. Take me away, Andy. Save me.

ANDROCLEES [*rising*] Meggy, there's one chance for you. I'll take him pretty nigh twenty minutes to eat me (I'm rather stringy and tough) and you can escape in less time than that.

MEGAERA Oh, don't talk about eating [*The lion rises with a great groan and limps towards them*] Oh! [*She faints*]

ANDROCLEES [*quaking, but keeping between the lion and Megaera*] Don't you come near my wife, do you hear? [*The lion groans. Androcles can hardly stand for trembling*] Meggy, run! Run for your life! If I take my eye off him, it's all up [*The lion holds up his wounded paw and flaps it piteously before Androcles*] Oh, he's lame, poor old chap! He's got a thorn in his paw. A frightfully big thorn [*Full of sympathy*] Oh, poor old man! Did um get an awful thorn into um's tootsums wootsums? Has it made um too sick to eat a nice little Christian man for um's breakfast? Oh, a nice little Christian man will get um's thorn out for um, and then um shall eat the nice Christian man and the nice Christian man's nice big tender wifey pifey [*The lion responds by moans of self-pity*] Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Now, now [*taking the paw in his hand*], um is not to bite and not to scratch, not even if it hurts a very very little. Now make velvet paws. That's right [*He pulls gingerly at the thorn. The lion, with an angry yell of pain, jerks back his paw so abruptly that Androcles is thrown on his back*]. Steadeeee! Oh, did the nasty cruel little Christian man hurt the sore paw? [*The lion moans assentingly but apologetically*] Well, one more little pull and it will be all over. Just one little, little, leetle pull, and then um will live happily ever after [*He gives the thorn another pull. The lion roars and snaps his jaws with a terrifying clash*] Oh, mustn't frighten um's good kind doctor, um's affectionate nurse. That didn't hurt at all. Not a bit. Just one more. Just to shew how the brave big lion can bear pain, not like the little crybaby Christian man. Oopsh! [*The thorn comes out. The lion yells with pain, and shakes his paw wildly*] That's it! [*Holding up the thorn*] Now it's out. Now lick um's paw to take away the nasty inflammation. See?

[*He licks his own hand. The lion nods intelligently and licks his paw industriously*] Clever little liony-piony! Understands um's dear old friend Andy Wandy [*The lion licks his face*] Yes, kissums Andy Wandy [*The lion, dragging his tail violently, rises on his hind legs, and embraces Androcles, who makes a wry face and cries*] Velvet paws! Velvet paws! [*The lion draws in his claws*] That's right [*He embraces the lion, who finally takes the end of his tail in one paw, places that tight round Androcles' waist, resting it on his hip. Androcles takes the other paw in his hand, stretches out his arm, and the two waltz rapturously round and round and finally away through the jungle*]

MEGAERA [*who has revived during the waltz*] Oh, you coward, you haven't danced with me for years, and now you go off dancing with a great brute beast that you haven't known for ten minutes and that wants to eat your own wife. Coward! Coward! Coward! [*She rushes off after them into the jungle*]

ACT I

Evening. The end of three converging roads to Rome. Three triumphal arches span them where they debouch on a square at the gate of the city. Looking north through the arches one can see the campagna threaded by the three long dusty tracks. On the east and west sides of the square are long stone benches. An old beggar sits on the east side, his bowl at his feet.

Through the eastern arch a squad of Roman soldiers tramps along escorting a batch of Christian prisoners of both sexes and all ages, among them one Lavinia, a good-looking resolute young woman, apparently of higher social standing than her fellow-prisoners. A centurion, carrying his vine-rod cudgel, trudges alongside the squad, on its right, in command of it. All are tired and dusty, but the soldiers are dogged and indifferent, the Christians lighthearted and determined to treat their hardships as a joke and encourage one another.

A bugle is heard far behind on the road, where the rest of the cohort is following.

CENTURION [*stopping*] Halt! Orders from the Captain [*They halt and wait*] Now then, you Christians, none of your larks. The captain's coming. Mind you behave yourselves. No singing. Look respectful. Look serious, if you're capable of it. See that big building over there! That's the Coliseum. That's where you'll be thrown to the lions or set to fight

the gladiators presently Think of that, and still help you to behave properly before the captain [*The Captain arrives*] Attention! Salute! [*The soldiers salute*]

A CHRISTIAN [*cheerfully*] God bless you, Captain!

THE CENTURION [*scandalised*] Silence!

The Captain, a patrician, handsome, about thirty-five, very cold and distinguished, very superior and authoritative, steps up on a stone seat at the west side of the square, behind the centurion, so as to dominate the others more effectually

THE CAPTAIN Centurion.

THE CENTURION [*standing at attention and saluting*] Sir?

THE CAPTAIN [*speaking stiffly and officially*] You will remind your men, Centurion, that we are now entering Rome You will instruct them that once inside the gates of Rome they are in the presence of the Emperor You will make them understand that the lax discipline of the march cannot be permitted here You will instruct them to shave every day, not every week You will impress on them particularly that there must be an end to the profanity and blasphemy of singing Christian hymns on the march I have to reprimand you, Centurion, for not only allowing this, but actually doing it yourself

THE CENTURION [*apologetic*] The men march better, Captain

THE CAPTAIN No doubt For that reason an exception is made in the case of the march called Onward Christian Soldiers This may be sung, except when marching through the forum or within hearing of the Emperor's palace, but the words must be altered to "Throw them to the Lions"

The Christians burst into shrieks of uncontrollable laughter, to the great scandal of the Centurion.

CENTURION Silence! Silen-n-n-n-nce! Wheres your behavior? Is that the way to listen to an officer? [*To the Captain*] Thats what we have to put up with from these Christians every day, sir. Theyre always laughing and joking something scandalous Theyve no religion thats how it is

LAVINIA. But I think the Captain meant us to laugh, Centurion It was so funny

CENTURION Youll find out how funny it is when youre thrown to the lions tomorrow [*To the Captain, who looks displeased*] Beg pardon, Sir. [*To the Christians*] Silennnnce!

THE CAPTAIN You are to instruct your men that all intimacy with Christian prisoners must now cease The men have fallen into habits of dependence upon the prisoners, especially the female prisoners, for cooking, repairs to uniforms, writing letters, and advice in their private affairs In a Roman soldier such dependence is inadmissible Let me see no more of it whilst we are in the city. Further, your orders are that in addressing Christian prisoners, the manners and tone of your men must express abhorrence and contempt Any shortcoming in this respect will be regarded as a breach of discipline [*He turns to the prisoners*] Prisoners CENTURION [*fiercely*] Prisonerrrrrs! Tention! Silence!

THE CAPTAIN I call your attention, prisoners, to the fact that you may be called on to appear in the Imperial Circus at any time from tomorrow onwards according to the requirements of the managers I may inform you that as there is a shortage of Christians just now, you may expect to be called on very soon.

LAVINIA What will they do to us, Captain? CENTURION Silence!

THE CAPTAIN The women will be conducted into the arena with the wild beasts of the Imperial Menagerie, and will suffer the consequences The men, if of an age to bear arms, will be given weapons to defend themselves, if they choose, against the Imperial Gladiators

LAVINIA Captain is there no hope that this cruel persecution—

CENTURION [*shocked*] Silence! Hold your tongue, there Persecution, indeed!

THE CAPTAIN [*unmoved and somewhat sardonic*] Persecution is not a term applicable to the acts of the Emperor The Emperor is the Defender of the Faith. In throwing you to the lions he will be upholding the interests of religion in Rome If you were to throw him to the lions, that would no doubt be persecution.

The Christians again laugh heartily

CENTURION [*horrified*] Silence, I tell you! Keep silence there Did anyone ever hear the like of this?

LAVINIA Captain there will be nobody to appreciate your jokes when we are gone

THE CAPTAIN [*unshaken in his official delivery*] I call the attention of the female prisoner Lavinia to the fact that as the Emperor is a

divine personage, her imputation of cruelty is not only treason, but sacrilege I point out to her further that there is no foundation for the charge, as the Emperor does not desire that any prisoner should suffer, nor can any Christian be harmed save through his or her own obstinacy All that is necessary is to sacrifice to the gods a simple and convenient ceremony effected by dropping a pinch of incense on the altar, after which the prisoner is at once set free Under such circumstances you have only your own perverse folly to blame if you suffer I suggest to you that if you cannot burn a morsel of incense as a matter of conviction, you might at least do so as a matter of good taste, to avoid shocking the religious convictions of your fellow citizens I am aware that these considerations do not weigh with Christians, but it is my duty to call your attention to them in order that you may have no ground for complaining of your treatment, or of accusing the Emperor of cruelty when he is shewing you the most signal clemency Looked at from this point of view, every Christian who has perished in the arena has really committed suicide

LAVINIA Captain your jokes are too grim Do not think it is easy for us to die Our faith makes life far stronger and more wonderful in us than when we walked in darkness and had nothing to live for Death is harder for us than for you the martyr's agony is as bitter as his triumph is glorious

THE CAPTAIN [*rather troubled, addressing her personally and gravely*] A martyr, Lavinia, is a fool Your death will prove nothing

LAVINIA Then why kill me?

THE CAPTAIN I mean that truth, if there be any truth, needs no martyrs

LAVINIA No, but my faith, like your sword, needs testing Can you test your sword except by staking your life on it?

THE CAPTAIN [*suddenly resuming his official tone*] I call the attention of the female prisoner to the fact that Christians are not allowed to draw the Emperor's officers into arguments and put questions to them for which the military regulations provide no answer [*The Christian's titter*]

LAVINIA Captain how can you?

THE CAPTAIN I call the female prisoner's attention specially to the fact that four comfortable homes have been offered her by officers of this regiment, of which she can

have her choice the moment she chooses to sacrifice as all wellbred Roman ladies do I have no more to say to the prisoners

CENTURION Dismiss! But stay where you are

THE CAPTAIN Centurion you will remain here with your men in charge of the prisoners until the arrival of three Christian prisoners in the custody of a cohort of the tenth legion Among these prisoners you will particularly identify an armorer named Ferrovius, of dangerous character and great personal strength, and a Greek tailor reputed to be a sorcerer, by name Androcles You will add the three to your charge here and march them all to the Coliseum, where you will deliver them into the custody of the master of the gladiators and take his receipt, countersigned by the keeper of the beasts and the acting manager You understand your instructions?

CENTURION Yes, sir

THE CAPTAIN Dismiss [*He throws off his air of parade, and descends from his perch The Centurion seats himself on it and prepares for a nap, whilst his men stand at ease The Christians sit down on the west side of the square, glad to rest Lavinia alone remains standing to speak to the Captain*]

LAVINIA Captain is this man who is to join us the famous Ferrovius, who has made such wonderful conversions in the northern cities?

THE CAPTAIN Yes We are warned that he has the strength of an elephant and the temper of a mad bull Also that he is stark mad Not a model Christian, it would seem

LAVINIA You need not fear him if he is a Christian, Captain

THE CAPTAIN [*coldly*] I shall not fear him in any case, Lavinia.

LAVINIA [*her eyes dancing*] How brave of you, Captain!

THE CAPTAIN You are right it was a silly thing to say [*In a lower tone, humane and urgent*] Lavinia do Christians know how to love?

LAVINIA [*composedly*] Yes, Captain they love even their enemies

THE CAPTAIN Is that easy?

LAVINIA Very easy, Captain, when their enemies are as handsome as you

THE CAPTAIN Lavinia you are laughing at me

LAVINIA At you, Captain! Impossible.

THE CAPTAIN Then you are flirting with me, which is worse. Don't be foolish.

LAVINIA But such a very handsome captain.

THE CAPTAIN Incorrigible! [*Urgently*] Listen to me. The men in that audience tomorrow will be the vilest of voluptuaries: men in whom the only passion excited by a beautiful woman is a lust to see her tortured and torn shrieking limb from limb. It is a crime to gratify that passion. It is offering yourself for violation by the whole rabble of the streets and the riff-raff of the court at the same time. Why will you not choose rather a kindly love and an honorable alliance?

LAVINIA They cannot violate my soul. I alone can do that by sacrificing to false gods.

THE CAPTAIN. Sacrifice then to the true God. What does his name matter? We call him Jupiter. The Greeks call him Zeus. Call him what you will as you drop the incense on the altar flame. He will understand.

LAVINIA No. I couldn't. That is the strange thing, Captain, that a little pinch of incense should make all that difference. Religion is such a great thing that when I meet really religious people we are friends at once, no matter what name we give to the divine will that made us and moves us. Oh, do you think that I, a woman, would quarrel with you for sacrificing to a woman god like Diana, if Diana meant to you what Christ means to me? No; we should kneel side by side before her altar like two children. But when men who believe neither in my god nor in their own—men who do not know the meaning of the word religion—when these men drag me to the foot of an iron statue that has become the symbol of the terror and darkness through which they walk, of their cruelty and greed, of their hatred of God and their oppression of man—when they ask me to pledge my soul before the people that this hideous idol is God, and that all this wickedness and falsehood is divine truth, I cannot do it, not if they could put a thousand cruel deaths on me. I tell you, it is physically impossible. Listen, Captain. Did you ever try to catch a mouse in your hand? Once there was a dear little mouse that used to come out and play on my table as I was reading. I wanted to take him in my hand and caress him; and sometimes he got among my books so that he could not escape me

when I stretched out my hand. And I did stretch out my hand, but it always came back in spite of me. I was not afraid of him in my heart; but my hand refused. It is not in the nature of my hand to touch a mouse. Well, Captain, if I took a pinch of incense in my hand and stretched it out over the altar fire, my hand would come back. My body would be true to my faith even if you could corrupt my mind. And all the time I should believe more in Diana than my persecutors have ever believed in anything. Can you understand that?

THE CAPTAIN [*simply*] Yes. I understand that. But my hand would not come back. The hand that holds the sword has been trained not to come back from anything but victory.

LAVINIA. Not even from death?

THE CAPTAIN. Least of all from death.

LAVINIA. Then I must not come back from death either. A woman has to be braver than a soldier.

THE CAPTAIN. Prouder, you mean.

LAVINIA [*startled*] Prouder! You call our courage pride!

THE CAPTAIN. There is no such thing as courage; there is only pride. You Christians are the proudest devils on earth.

LAVINIA [*hurt*] Pray God then my pride may never become a false pride. [*She turns away as if she did not wish to continue the conversation, but softens and says to him with a smile*] Thank you for trying to save me.

THE CAPTAIN. I knew it was no use; but one tries in spite of one's knowledge.

LAVINIA. Something stirs, even in the iron breast of a Roman soldier?

THE CAPTAIN. It will soon be iron again. I have seen many women die, and forgotten them in a week.

LAVINIA. Remember me for a fortnight, handsome Captain. I shall be watching you, perhaps.

THE CAPTAIN. From the skies? Do not deceive yourself, Lavinia. There is no future for you beyond the grave.

LAVINIA. What does that matter? Do you think I am only running away from the terrors of life into the comfort of heaven? If there were no future, or if the future were one of torment, I should have to go just the same. The hand of God is upon me.

THE CAPTAIN. Yes. When all is said, we are both patricians, Lavinia, and must die for

our beliefs Farewell [*He offers her his hand She takes it and presses it He walks away, trim and calm She looks after him for a moment, and cries a little as he disappears through the eastern arch A trumpet-call is heard from the road through the western arch*]

CENTURION [*waking up and rising*] Cohort of the tenth with prisoners Two file out with me to receive them [*He goes out through the western arch, followed by four soldiers in two files*]

Lentulus and Metellus come into the square from the west side with a little retinue of servants Both are young courtiers, dressed in the extremity of fashion Lentulus, is slender, fair-haired, epicene Metellus is manly, compactly built, olive skinned, not a talker

LENTULUS Christians, by Jove! Lets chaff them

METELLUS Awful brutes If you knew as much about them as I do you wouldnt want to chaff them Leave them to the lions

LENTULUS [*indicating Lavinia, who is still looking towards the arches after the Captain*] That woman's got a figure [*He walks past her, staring at her invitingly, but she is preoccupied and is not conscious of him*] Do you turn the other cheek when they kiss you?

LAVINIA [*starting*] What?

LENTULUS Do you turn the other cheek when they kiss you, fascinating Christian?

LAVINIA Dont be foolish [*To Metellus, who has remained on her right, so that she is between them*] Please dont let your friend behave like a cad before the soldiers How are they to respect and obey patricians if they see them behaving like street boys? [*Sharply to Lentulus*] Pull yourself together, man Hold your head up Keep the corners of your mouth firm, and treat me respectfully What do you take me for?

LENTULUS [*irresolutely*] Look here, you know I—you—I—

LAVINIA Stuff! Go about your business [*She turns decisively away and sits down with her comrades, leaving him disconcerted*]

METELLUS You didnt get much out of that I told you they were brutes

LENTULUS Plucky little filly! I suppose she thinks I care [*With an air of indifference he strolls with Metellus to the east side of the square, where they stand watching the return of the Centurion through the western arch with his men, escorting three prisoners Ferrovius, Androcles, and Spintho Ferrovius is a powerful, choleric man*

in the prime of life, with large nostrils, staring eyes, and a thick neck a man whose sensibilities are keen and violent to the verge of madness Spintho is a debaucher, the irrel of a good-looking man gone hopelessly to the bad Androcles is overwhelmed with grief, and is restraining his tears with great difficulty]

THE CENTURION [*to Lavinia*] Here are some pals for you This little bit is Ferrovius that you talk so much about [*Ferrovius turns on him threateningly. The Centurion holds up his left forefinger in admonition*] Now remember that youre a Christian, and that youve got to return good for evil [*Ferrovius controls himself convulsively, moves away from temptation to the east side near Lentulus, clasps his hands in silent prayer, and throws himself on his knees*] Thats the way to manage them, eh! This fine fellow [*indicating Androcles, who comes to his left, and makes Lavinia a heart-broken salutation*] is a sorcerer A Greek tailor, he is A real sorcerer, too, no mistake about it. The tenth marches with a leopard at the head of the column He made a pet of the leopard, and now he's crying at being parted from it [*Androcles sniffs lamentably*] Aint you, old chap? Well, cheer up, we march with a Billy goat [*Androcles brightens up*] thats killed two leopards and ate a turkey-cock You can have him for a pet if you like [*Androcles, quite consoled, goes past the Centurion to Lavinia, and sits down contentedly on the ground on her left*] This dirty dog [*collaring Spintho*] is a real Christian He mobs the temples, he does [*at each accusation he gives the neck of Spintho's tunic a twist*], he goes smashing things mad drunk, he does, he steals the gold vessels, he does, he assaults the priestesses, he does—yah! [*He slings Spintho into the middle of the group of prisoners*] Youre the sort that makes duty a pleasure, you are

SPINTHO [*gasping*] Thats it strangle me Kick me Beat me Revile me Our Lord was beaten and reviled Thats my way to heaven Every martyr goes to heaven, no matter what he's done That is so, isnt it, brother?

CENTURION Well, if youre going to heaven, I dont want to go there I wouldnt be seen with you.

LENTULUS Haw! Good! [*Indicating the kneeling Ferrovius*] Is this one of the turn-the-other-cheek gentlemen, Centurion?

CENTURION Yes, sir Lucky for you too, sir, if you want to take any liberties with him

LENTULUS [*to Ferrovius*] You turn the other

cheek when you're struck, I'm told

FERROVIUS [*slowly turning his great eyes on him*] Yes, by the grace of God, I do, now

LENTULUS Not that you're a coward, of course; but out of pure piety.

FERROVIUS I fear God more than man; at least I try to

LENTULUS Lets see [*He strikes him on the cheek. Androcles makes a wild movement to rise and interfere; but Lavinia holds him down, watching Ferrovius intently. Ferrovius, without flinching, turns the other cheek. Lentulus, rather out of countenance, titlers foolishly, and strikes him again feebly*] You know, I should feel ashamed if I let myself be struck like that, and took it lying down. But then I'm not a Christian. I'm a man [*Ferrovius rises impressively and towers over him. Lentulus becomes white with terror, and a shade of green flickers in his cheek for a moment*]

FERROVIUS [*with the calm of a steam hammer*] I have not always been faithful. The first man who struck me as you have just struck me was a stronger man than you. He hit me harder than I expected. I was tempted and fell; and it was then that I first tasted bitter shame. I never had a happy moment after that until I had knelt and asked his forgiveness by his bedside in the hospital [*Putting his hands on Lentulus's shoulders with paternal weight*]. But now I have learnt to resist with a strength that is not my own. I am not ashamed now, nor angry.

LENTULUS [*uneasily*] Er—good evening [*He tries to move away*].

FERROVIUS [*gripping his shoulders*] Oh, do not harden your heart, young man. Come. Try for yourself whether our way is not better than yours. I will now strike you on one cheek; and you will turn the other and learn how much better you will feel than if you gave way to the promptings of anger. [*He holds him with one hand and clenches the other fist*]

LENTULUS Centurion: I call on you to protect me.

CENTURION You asked for it, sir. It's no business of ours. You've had two whacks at him. Better pay him a trifle and square it that way.

LENTULUS Yes, of course [*To Ferrovius*] It was only a bit of fun, I assure you; I meant no harm. Here [*He proffers a gold coin*].

FERROVIUS [*taking it and throwing it to the old beggar, who snatches it up eagerly, and*

hobbles off to spend it] Give all thou hast to the poor. Come, friend. courage! I may hurt your body for a moment, but your soul will rejoice in the victory of the spirit over the flesh [*He prepares to strike*].

ANDROCLES Easy, Ferrovius, easy. You broke the last man's jaw.

Lentulus, with a moan of terror, attempts to fly, but Ferrovius holds him ruthlessly.

FERROVIUS Yes, but I saved his soul. What matters a broken jaw?

LENTULUS Don't touch me, do you hear? The law—

FERROVIUS The law will throw me to the lions tomorrow. What worse could it do were I to slay you? Pray for strength; and it shall be given to you.

LENTULUS Let me go. Your religion forbids you to strike me.

FERROVIUS On the contrary, it commands me to strike you. How can you turn the other cheek, if you are not first struck on the one cheek?

LENTULUS [*almost in tears*] But I'm convinced already that what you said is quite right. I apologize for striking you.

FERROVIUS [*greatly pleased*] My son, have I softened your heart? Has the good seed fallen in a fruitful place? Are your feet turning towards a better path?

LENTULUS [*abjectly*] Yes, yes. There's a great deal in what you say.

FERROVIUS [*radiant*] Join us. Come to the lions. Come to suffering and death.

LENTULUS [*falling on his knees and bursting into tears*] Oh, help me. Mother! mother!

FERROVIUS These tears will water your soul and make it bring forth good fruit, my son. God has greatly blessed my efforts at conversion. Shall I tell you a miracle—yes, a miracle—wrought by me in Cappadocia? A young man—just such a one as you, with golden hair like yours—scoffed at and struck me as you scoffed at and struck me. I sat up all night with that youth wrestling for his soul, and in the morning not only was he a Christian, but his hair was as white as snow. [*Lentulus falls in a dead faint*] There, there. Take him away. The spirit has overwrought him, poor lad. Carry him gently to his house, and leave the rest to heaven.

CENTURION. Take him home. [*The servants, intimidated, hastily carry him out. Metellus is about to follow, when Ferrovius lays his hand on his shoulder*].

FERROVIUS You are his friend, young man
You will see that he is taken safely home

MECELLUS [*with awestruck civility*] Certainly,
sir I shall do whatever you think best. Most
happy to have made your acquaintance, I'm
sure You may depend on me Good evening,
sir.

FERROVIUS [*with unction*] The blessing of
heaven upon you and him

MECELLUS follows Lentulus The Centurion
returns to his seat to resume his interrupted nap
The deepest awe has settled on the spectators
Ferrovius, with a long sigh of happiness, goes
to Lavinia, and offers her his hand

LAVINIA [*taking it*] So that is how you convert
people, Ferrovius

FERROVIUS Yes there has been a blessing
on my work in spite of my unworthiness and
my backslidings—all through my wicked,
devilish temper This man—

ANDROCLES [*hastily*] Dont slap me on the
back, brother She knows you mean me

FERROVIUS How I wish I were weak like
our brother here! for then I should perhaps
be meek and gentle like him And yet there
seems to be a special providence that makes
my trials less than his I hear tales of the
crowd scoffing and casting stones and reviling
the brethren, but when I come, all this stops
my influence calms the passions of the mob
they listen to me in silence, and infidels are
often converted by a straight heart-to-heart
talk with me Every day I feel happier, more
confident Every day lightens the load of
the great terror

LAVINIA The great terror? What is that?

Ferrovius shakes his head and does not answer
He sits down beside her on her left, and buries
his face in his hands in gloomy meditation

ANDROCLES Well, you see, sister, he's never
quite sure of himself Suppose at the last
moment in the arena, with the gladiators
there to fight him, one of them was to say
anything to annoy him, he might forget him-
self and lay that gladiator out

LAVINIA. That would be splendid

FERROVIUS [*springing up in horror*] What!

ANDROCLES Oh, sister!

FERROVIUS Splendid to betray my master,
like Peter! Splendid to act like any common
blackguard in the day of my proving! Woman
you are no Christian [*He moves away from her
to the middle of the square, as if her neighbor-
hood contaminated him*]

LAVINIA [*laughing*] You know, Ferrovius,

I am not always a Christian I dont think
anybody is. There are moments when I for-
get all about it, and something comes out
quite naturally as it did then

SPINTHO What does it matter? If you die
in the arena, you'll be a martyr; and all
martyrs go to heaven, no matter what they
have done Thats so, isnt it, Ferrovius?

FERROVIUS Yes that is so, if we are faithful
to the end

LAVINIA I'm not so sure.

SPINTHO Dont say that Thats blasphemy
Dont say that, I tell you We shall be saved,
no matter what we do

LAVINIA Perhaps you men will all go into
heaven bravely and in triumph, with your
heads erect and golden trumpets sounding
for you But I am sure I shall only be allowed
to squeeze myself in through a little crack
in the gate after a great deal of begging I
am not good always I have moments only

SPINTHO Youre talking nonsense, woman
I tell you, martyrdom pays all scores

ANDROCLES Well, let us hope so, brother,
for your sake Youve had a gay time, havnt
you? with your raids on the temples I cant
help thinking that heaven will be very dull
for a man of your temperament [*Spintho
snarls*] Dont be angry I say it only to console
you in case you should die in your bed
tonight in the natural way. Theres a lot of
plague about

SPINTHO [*rising and running about in abject
terror*] I never thought of that Oh Lord,
spare me to be martyred Oh, what a thought
to put into the mind of a brother! Oh, let me
be martyred today, now I shall die in the
night and go to hell Youre a sorcerer youve
put death into my mind Oh, curse you, curse
you! [*He tries to seize Androcles by the throat*]

FERROVIUS [*holding him in a grasp of iron*]
Whats this, brother? Anger! Violence! Rais-
ing your hand to a brother Christian!

SPINTHO Its easy for you Youre strong
Your nerves are all right But I'm full of
disease [*Ferrovius takes his hand from him
with instinctive disgust*] Ive drunk all my
nerves away I shall have the horrors all
night.

ANDROCLES [*sympathetic*] Oh, dont take on
so, brother We're all sinners

SPINTHO [*snivelling, trying to feel consoled*]
Yes I daresay if the truth were known, youre
all as bad as I am

LAVINIA [*contemptuously*] Does that com-

fort you?

FERROVIUS [*sternly*] Pray, man, pray.

SPINTHO Whats the good of praying? If we're martyred we shall go to heaven, shant we, whether we pray or not?

FERROVIUS Whats that? Not pray! [*Seizing him again*] Pray this instant, you dog, you rotten hound, you slimy snake, you beastly goat, or—

SPINTHO Yes: beat me: kick me I forgive you. mind that

FERROVIUS [*spurning him with loathing*] Yah! [*Spintho reels away and falls in front of Ferrovius*]

ANDROCLES [*reaching out and catching the skirt of Ferrovius's tunic*] Dear brother if you wouldnt mind—just for my sake—

FERROVIUS Well?

ANDROCLES Dont call him by the names of the animals Weve no right to Ive had such friends in dogs. A pet snake is the best of company I was nursed on goat's milk. Is it fair to them to call the lke of him a dog or a snake or a goat?

FERROVIUS. I only meant that they have no souls

ANDROCLES [*anxiously protesting*] Oh, believe me, they have Just the same as you and me I really dont think I could consent to go to heaven if I thought there were to be no animals there Think of what they suffer here

FERROVIUS Thats true Yes. that is just They will have their share in heaven

SPINTHO [*who has picked himself up and is sneaking past Ferrovius on his left, sneers derisively*]¹¹

FERROVIUS [*turning on him fiercely*] Whats that you say?

SPINTHO [*covering*] Nothing

FERROVIUS [*clenching his fist*] Do animals go to heaven or not?

SPINTHO I never said they didnt

FERROVIUS [*implacable*] Do they or do they not?

SPINTHO They do they do [*Scrambling out of Ferrovius's reach*] Oh, curse you for frightening me!

A bugle call is heard

CENTURION [*waking up*] Tention! Form as before Now then, prisoners. up with you and trot along spry [*The soldiers fall in The Christians rise*]

A man with an ox goad comes running through the central arch.

THE OX DRIVER. Here, you soldiers! clear

out of the way for the Emperor.

THE CENTURION. Emperor! Wheres the Emperor? You aint the Emperor, are you?

THE OX DRIVER Its the menagerie service My team of oxen is drawing the new lion to the Coliseum You clear the road

CENTURION. What! Go in after you in your dust, with half the town at the heels of you and your lion! Not likely. We go first

THE OX DRIVER The menagerie service is the Emperor's personal retinue. You clear out, I tell you

CENTURION You tell me, do you? Well, I'll tell you something If the lion is menagerie service, the lion's dinner is menagerie service too. This [*pointing to the Christians*] is the lion's dinner So back with you to your bullocks double quick, and learn your place. March [*The soldiers start*] Now then, you Christians. step out there

LAVINIA [*marching*] Come along, the rest of the dinner I shall be the olives and anchovies

ANOTHER CHRISTIAN [*laughing*] I shall be the soup.

ANOTHER I shall be the fish.

ANOTHER. Ferrovius shall be the roast boar.

FERROVIUS [*heavily*] I see the joke Yes, yes I shall be the roast boar Ha! ha! [*He laughs conscientiously and marches out with them*].

ANDROCLES [*following*] I shall be the mince pie [*Each announcement is received with a louder laugh by all the rest as the joke catches on*]

CENTURION [*scandalized*] Silence! Have some sense of your situation Is this the way for martyrs to behave? [*To Spintho, who is quaking and loitering*] I know what you'll be at that dinner You'll be the emetic [*He shoves him rudely along*]

SPINTHO Its too dreadful. I'm not fit to die.

CENTURION. Fitter than you are to live, you swine

They pass from the square westward The oxen, drawing a waggon with a great wooden cage and the lion in it, arrive through the central arch.

ACT II

Behind the Emperor's box at the Coliseum, where the performers assemble before entering the arena In the middle a wide passage leading to the arena descends from the floor level under the imperial box On both sides of this passage

steps ascend to a landing at the back entrance to the box. The landing forms a bridge across the passage. At the entrance to the passage are two bronze mirrors, one on each side.

On the rest side of this passage, on the right hand of anyone coming from the box and standing on the bridge, the martyrs are sitting on the steps. Lavinia is seated half-way up, thoughtful, trying to look death in the face. On her left Androcles consoles himself by nursing a cat. Ferocious stands behind them, his eyes blazing, his figure stiff with intense resolution. At the foot of the steps crouches Spintho, with his head clutched in his hands, full of horror at the approach of martyrdom.

On the east side of the passage the gladiators are standing and sitting at ease, waiting, like the Christians, for their turn in the arena. One (Retarius) is a nearly naked man with a net and a trident. Another (Secutor) is in armor with a sword. He carries a helmet with a barred visor. The editor of the gladiators sits on a chair a little apart from them.

The Call Boy enters from the passage.

THE CALL BOY. Number six. Retarius versus Secutor.

The gladiator with the net picks it up. The gladiator with the helmet puts it on, and the two go into the arena, the net thrower taking out a little brush and arranging his hair as he goes, the other tightening his straps and shaking his shoulders loose. Both look at themselves in the mirrors before they enter the passage.

LAVINIA. Will they really kill one another?

SPINTHO. Yes, if the people turn down their thumbs.

THE EDITOR. You know nothing about it. The people indeed! Do you suppose we would kill a man worth perhaps fifty talents to please the riffraff? I should like to catch any of my men at it.

SPINTHO. I thought—

THE EDITOR. 'Tis not 'thine. You thought! Who cares! But you 'hind! You'll be killed all right enough.

SPINTHO [groans and again hides his face].

LAVINIA. Then is nobody ever killed except us poor Christians?

THE EDITOR. If the vestal virgins turn down their thumbs, that's another matter. They're ladies of rank.

LAVINIA. Does the Emperor ever interfere?

THE EDITOR. Oh, yes, he turns his thumb up fast enough if the vestal virgins want to have one of his pet fighting men killed.

ANDROCLAS. But don't they ever just only pretend to kill one another? Why shouldn't you pretend to die, and get dragged out as if you were dead, and then get up and go home, like an actor?

THE EDITOR. See here! You want to know too much! There will be no pretending about the new lion. Let that be enough for you. He's hungry.

SPINTHO [groaning with horror]. Oh, Lord! Can't you stop talking about it? Isn't it bad enough for us without that?

ANDROCLAS. I'm glad he's hungry. Not that I want him to suffer, poor chap! but then he'll enjoy eating me so much more. There's a cheerful side to everything.

THE EDITOR [rising and striding over to Androcles]. Here! don't you be obstinate. Come with me and drop the pinch of incense on the altar. That's all you need do to be let off.

ANDROCLAS. No, thank you very much indeed, but I really mustn't.

THE EDITOR. What! Not to save your life?

ANDROCLAS. I'd rather not. I couldn't sacrifice to Diana, she's a huntress, you know, and kills things.

THE EDITOR. That don't matter. You can choose your own altar. Sacrifice to Jupiter, he likes animals, he turns himself into an animal when he goes off duty.

ANDROCLAS. No, it's very kind of you, but I feel I can't save myself that way.

THE EDITOR. But I don't ask you to do it to save yourself. I ask you to do it to oblige me personally.

ANDROCLAS [scrambling up in the greatest agitation]. Oh, please don't say that! This is dreadful! You mean so kindly by me that it seems quite horrible to disoblige you. If you could arrange for me to sacrifice when there's nobody looking, I shouldn't mind. But I must go into the arena with the rest. My honor, you know.

THE EDITOR. Honor! The honor of a tailor!

ANDROCLAS [apologetically]. Well, perhaps honor is too strong an expression. Still, you know, I couldn't allow the tailors to get a bad name through me.

THE EDITOR. How much will you remember of all that when you smell the beast's breath and see his jaws opening to tear out your throat?

SPINTHO [rising with a yell of terror]. I can't bear it! Where's the altar? I'll sacrifice!

FERROVIUS. Dog of an apostate Iscariot!

SPINTHO. I'll repent afterwards I fully mean to die in the arena I'll die a martyr and go to heaven, but not this time, not now, not until my nerves are better Besides, I'm too young. I want to have just one more good time [*The gladiators laugh at him*] Oh, will no one tell me where the altar is? [*He dashes into the passage and vanishes*]

ANDROCLES [*to the Editor, pointing after Spintho*] Brother I cant do that, not even to oblige you Dont ask me

THE EDITOR Well, if youre determined to die, I cant help you But I wouldnt be put off by a swine like that

FERROVIUS Peace, peace tempt him not Get thee behind him, Satan

THE EDITOR [*flushing with rage*] For two pins I'd take a turn in the arena myself to-day, and pay you out for daring to talk to me like that

Ferrovius springs forward

LAVINIA [*rising quickly and interposing*] Brother, brother you forget

FERROVIUS [*curbing himself by a mighty effort*] Oh, my temper, my wicked temper! [*To the Editor, as Lavinia sits down again reassured*] Forgive me, brother. My heart was full of wrath I should have been thinking of your dear precious soul

THE EDITOR Yah! [*He turns his back on Ferrovius contemptuously, and goes back to his seat*]

FERROVIUS [*continuing*] And I forgot it all I thought of nothing but offering to fight you with one hand tied behind me

THE EDITOR [*turning pugnaciously*] What!

FERROVIUS [*on the border line between zeal and ferocity*] Oh, dont give way to pride and wrath, brother. I could do it so easily. I could—

They are separated by the Menagerie Keeper, who rushes in from the passage, furious.

THE KEEPER Heres a nice business! Who let that Christian out of here down to the dens when we were changing the lion into the cage next the arena?

THE EDITOR. Nobody let him He let himself

THE KEEPER Well, the lion's ate him.

Consternation The Christians rise, greatly agitated The gladiators sit callously, but are highly amused. All speak or cry out or laugh at once Tumult

LAVINIA Oh, poor wretch! FERROVIUS The

apostate has perished Praise be to God's justice! ANDROCLES The poor beast was starving It couldnt help itself THE CHRISTIANS. What! Ate him! How frightful! How terrible! Without a moment to repent! God be merciful to him, a sinner! Oh, I cant bear to think of it! In the midst of his sin! Horrible, horrible! THE EDITOR. Serve the rotter right! THE GLADIATORS Just walked into it, he did He's martyred all right enough Good old lion! Old Jock doesnt like that look at his face Devil a better! The Emperor will laugh when he hears of it I cant help smiling Ha ha ha!!!!

THE KEEPER. Now his appetite's taken off, he wont as much as look at another Christian for a week

ANDROCLES Couldnt you have saved him, brother?

THE KEEPER Saved him! Saved him from a lion that I'd just got mad with hunger! a wild one that came out of the forest not four weeks ago! He bolted him before you could say Balbus

LAVINIA [*sitting down again*] Poor Spintho! And it wont even count as martyrdom!

THE KEEPER Serve him right! What call had he to walk down the throat of one of my lions before he was asked?

ANDROCLES Perhaps the lion wont eat me now

THE KEEPER Yes thats just like a Christian think only of yourself! What am I to do? What am I to say to the Emperor when he sees one of my lions coming into the arena half asleep?

THE EDITOR Say nothing Give your old lion some bitters and a morsel of fried fish to wake up his appetite [*Laughter*]

THE KEEPER. Yes. it's easy for you to talk; but—

THE EDITOR [*scrambling to his feet*] Sh! Attention there! The Emperor. [*The Keeper bolts precipitately into the passage. The gladiators rise smartly and form into line*]

The Emperor enters on the Christians' side, conversing with Metellus, and followed by his suite

THE GLADIATORS Hail, Caesar! those about to die salute thee

CAESAR Good morrow, friends

Metellus shakes hands with the Editor, who accepts his condescension with bluff respect

LAVINIA Blessing, Caesar, and forgiveness!

CAESAR [*turning in some surprise at the saluta-*

tion] There is no forgiveness for Christianity

LAVINIA I did not mean that, Caesar I mean that we forgive you.

METELLUS. An inconceivable liberty! Do you not know, woman, that the Emperor can do no wrong and therefore cannot be forgiven?

LAVINIA I expect the Emperor knows better. Anyhow, we forgive him.

THE CHRISTIANS Amen!

CAESAR Metellus you see now the disadvantage of too much severity. These people have no hope, therefore they have nothing to restrain them from saying what they like to me. They are almost as impertinent as the gladiators. Which is the Greek sorcerer?

ANDROCLES [*humbly touching his forehead*] Me, your Worship.

CAESAR My Worship! Good! A new title. Well, what miracles can you perform?

ANDROCLES I can cure warts by rubbing them with my tailor's chalk, and I can live with my wife without beating her.

CAESAR Is that all?

ANDROCLES You don't know her, Caesar, or you wouldn't say that.

CAESAR Ah, well, my friend, we shall no doubt contrive a happy release for you. Which is Ferrovius?

FERROVIUS I am he.

CAESAR They tell me you can fight.

FERROVIUS It is easy to fight. I can die, Caesar.

CAESAR That is still easier, is it not?

FERROVIUS Not to me, Caesar. Death comes hard to my flesh, and fighting comes very easily to my spirit [*beating his breast and lamenting*]. Oh, sinner that I am! [*He throws himself down on the steps, deeply discouraged*].

CAESAR Metellus I should like to have this man in the Pretorian Guard.

METELLUS I should not, Caesar. He looks a spoilsport. There are men in whose presence it is impossible to have any fun: men who are a sort of walking conscience. He would make us all uncomfortable.

CAESAR For that reason, perhaps, it might be well to have him. An Emperor can hardly have too many consciences. [*To Ferrovius*] Listen, Ferrovius. [*Ferrovius shakes his head and will not look up*]. You and your friends shall not be outnumbered today in the arena. You shall have arms, and there will be no more than one gladiator to each Christian.

If you come out of the arena alive, I will consider favorably any request of yours, and give you a place in the Pretorian Guard. Even if the request be that no questions be asked about your faith I shall perhaps not refuse it.

FERROVIUS I will not fight. I will die. Better stand with the archangels than with the Pretorian Guard.

CAESAR I cannot believe that the archangels—whoever they may be—would not prefer to be recruited from the Pretorian Guard. However, as you please. Come, let us see the show.

As the Court ascends the steps, Secutor and Retiarius return from the arena through the passage. Secutor covered with dust and very angry. Retiarius grinning.

SECUTOR Ha, the Emperor. Now we shall see Caesar. I ask you whether it is fair for the Retiarius, instead of making a fair throw of his net at me, to swish it along the ground and throw the dust in my eyes, and then catch me when I'm blinded. If the vestals had not turned up their thumbs I should have been a dead man.

CAESAR [*halting on the stair*] There is nothing in the rules against it.

SECUTOR [*indignantly*] Caesar, is it a dirty trick or is it not?

CAESAR It is a dusty one, my friend. [*Obsequious laughter*]. Be on your guard next time.

SECUTOR Let him be on his guard. Next time I'll throw my sword at his heels and strangle him with his own net before he can hop off. [*To the Retiarius*] You see if I don't. [*He goes out past the gladiators, sulky and furious*].

CAESAR [*to the chuckling Retiarius*] These tricks are not wise, my friend. The audience likes to see a dead man in all his beauty and splendor. If you smudge his face and spoil his armor they will shew their displeasure by not letting you kill him. And when your turn comes, they will remember it against you and turn their thumbs down.

THE RETIARIUS Perhaps that is why I did it, Caesar. He bet me ten sesterces that he would vanquish me. If I had had to kill him I should not have had the money.

CAESAR [*indulgent, laughing*] You rogues, there is no end to your tricks. I'll dismiss you all and have elephants to fight. They fight fairly. [*He goes up to his box, and knocks at it*].

It is opened from within by the Captain, who stands as on parade to let him pass]

The Call Boy comes from the passage, followed by three attendants carrying respectively a bundle of swords, some helmets, and some breastplates and pieces of armor which they throw down in a heap

THE CALL BOY. By your leave, Caesar Number eleven! Gladiators and Christians!

Ferrovius springs up, ready for martyrdom The other Christians take the summons as best they can, some joyful and brave, some patient and dignified, some tearful and helpless, some embracing one another with emotion The Call Boy goes back into the passage

CAESAR [*turning at the door of the box*] The hour has come, Ferrovius I shall go into my box and see you killed, since you scorn the Pretorian Guard [*He goes into the box The Captain shuts the door, remaining inside with the Emperor. Metellus and the rest of the suite disperse to their seats The Christians, led by Ferrovius, move towards the passage*]

LAVINIA [*to Ferrovius*] Farewell

THE EDITOR. Steady there You Christians have got to fight Here! arm yourselves

FERROVIUS [*picking up a sword*] I'll die sword in hand to shew people that I could fight if it were my Master's will, and that I could kill the man who kills me if I chose

THE EDITOR. Put on that armor

FERROVIUS. No armor.

THE EDITOR [*bullying him*] Do what youre told. Put on that armor

FERROVIUS [*gripping the sword and looking dangerous*] I said, No armor

THE EDITOR. And what am I to say when I am accused of sending a naked man in to fight my men in armor?

FERROVIUS. Say your prayers, brother, and have no fear of the princes of this world

THE EDITOR. Tsha! You obstinate fool! [*He bites his lips irresolutely, not knowing exactly what to do*]

ANDROCLES [*to Ferrovius*] Farewell, brother, till we meet in the sweet by-and-by

THE EDITOR [*to Androcles*] You are going too. Take a sword there; and put on any armor you can find to fit you

ANDROCLES. No, really. I cant fight. I never could I cant bring myself to dislike anyone enough I'm to be thrown to the lions with the lady

THE EDITOR. Then get out of the way and hold your noise. [*Androcles steps aside with*

cheerful docility] Now then! Are you all ready there?

A trumpet is heard from the arena.

FERROVIUS [*starting convulsively*] Heaven give me strength!

THE EDITOR. Aha! That frightens you, does it?

FERROVIUS. Man! there is no terror like the terror of that sound to me. When I hear a trumpet or a drum or the clash of steel or the hum of the catapult as the great stone flies, fire runs through my veins. I feel my blood surge up hot behind my eyes. I must charge I must strike I must conquer Caesar himself will not be safe in his imperial seat if once that spirit gets loose in me. Oh, brothers, pray! exhort me! remind me that if I raise my sword my honor falls and my Master is crucified afresh

ANDROCLES. Just keep thinking how cruelly you might hurt the poor gladiators

FERROVIUS. It does not hurt a man to kill him

LAVINIA. Nothing but faith can save you

FERROVIUS. Faith! Which faith? There are two faiths. There is our faith. And there is the warrior's faith, the faith in fighting, the faith that sees God in the sword. How if that faith should overwhelm me?

LAVINIA. You will find your real faith in the hour of trial

FERROVIUS. That is what I fear. I know that I am a fighter. How can I feel sure that I am a Christian?

ANDROCLES. Throw away the sword, brother.

FERROVIUS. I cannot. It cleaves to my hand. I could as easily throw a woman I loved from my arms [*Starting*] Who spoke that blasphemy? Not I

LAVINIA. I cant help you, friend. I cant tell you not to save your own life. Something wilful in me wants to see you fight your way into heaven.

FERROVIUS. Ha!

ANDROCLES. But if you are going to give up our faith, brother, why not do it without hurting anybody? Dont fight them. Burn the incense

FERROVIUS. Burn the incense! Never

LAVINIA. That is only pride, Ferrovius.

FERROVIUS. Only pride! What is nobler than pride? [*Conscience stricken*] Oh, I'm steeped in sin. I'm proud of my pride

LAVINIA. They say we Christians are the proudest devils on earth—that only the weak

are meek Oh, I am worse than you I ought to send you to death, and I am tempting you
 ANDROCLES Brother, brother let them rage and kill let us be brave and suffer. You must go as a lamb to the slaughter.

FERROVIUS Aye, aye that is right Not as a lamb is slain by the butcher, but as a butcher might let himself be slain by a [looking at the Editor] by a silly ram whose head he could fetch off in one twist.

Before the Editor can retort, the Call Boy rushes up through the passage, and the Captain comes from the Emperor's box and descends the steps

THE CALL BOY In with you into the arena The stage is waiting

THE CAPTAIN The Emperor is waiting [To the Editor] What are you dreaming of, man? Send your men in at once

THE EDITOR Yes, sir it's these Christians hanging back

FERROVIUS [in a voice of thunder] Liarl

THE EDITOR [not heeding him] March [The gladiators told off to fight with the Christians march down the passage] Follow up there, you

THE CHRISTIAN MEN AND WOMEN [as they part] Be steadfast, brother Farewell Hold up the faith, brother Farewell Go to glory, dearest Farewell Remember we are praying for you Farewell Be strong, brother Farewell Dont forget that the divine love and our love surround you Farewell Nothing can hurt you remember that, brother Farewell Eternal glory, dearest Farewell

THE EDITOR [out of patience] Shove them in, there

The remaining gladiators and the Call Boy make a movement towards them

FERROVIUS [interposing] Touch them, dogs, and we die here, and cheat the heathen of their spectacle [To his fellow Christians] Brothers the great moment has come That passage is your hill to Calvary Mount it bravely, but meekly, and remember! not a word of reproach, not a blow nor a struggle Go [They go out through the passage He turns to Lavinia] Farewell

LAVINIA You forget I must follow before you are cold

FERROVIUS It is true Do not envy me because I pass before you to glory [He goes through the passage]

THE EDITOR [to the Call Boy] Sickening work, this Why cant they all be thrown to the lions? It's not a man's job. [He throws

himself moodily into his chair]

The remaining gladiators go back to their former places indifferently The Call Boy shrugs his shoulders and squats down at the entrance to the passage, near the Editor

Lavinia and the Christian women sit down again, wrung with grief, some weeping silently, some praying, some calm and steadfast Androcles sits down at Lavinia's feet The Captain stands on the stairs, watching her curiously

ANDROCLES I'm glad I havnt to fight. That would really be an awful martyrdom I am lucky

LAVINIA [looking at him with a pang of remorse] Androcles burn the incense you'll be forgiven Let my death atone for both. I feel as if I were killing you

ANDROCLES Dont think of me, sister Think of yourself That will keep your heart up

The Captain laughs sardonically

LAVINIA [startled she had forgotten his presence] Are you there, handsome Captain? Have you come to see me die?

THE CAPTAIN [coming to her side] I am on duty with the Emperor, Lavinia

LAVINIA Is it part of your duty to laugh at us?

THE CAPTAIN No that is part of my private pleasure Your friend here is a humorist. I laughed at his telling you to think of yourself to keep up your heart. I say, think of yourself and burn the incense

LAVINIA He is not a humorist he was right You ought to know that, Captain you have been face to face with death

THE CAPTAIN Not with certain death, Lavinia Only death in battle, which spares more men than death in bed What you are facing is certain death You have nothing left now but your faith in this craze of yours this Christianity Are your Christian fairy stories any truer than our stories about Jupiter and Diana, in which, I may tell you, I believe no more than the Emperor does, or any educated man in Rome?

LAVINIA Captain all that seems nothing to me now I'll not say that death is a terrible thing, but I will say that it is so real a thing that when it comes close, all the imaginary things—all the stories, as you call them—fade into mere dreams beside that inexorable reality I know now that I am not dying for stories or dreams Did you hear of the dreadful thing that happened here while we were waiting?

THE CAPTAIN I heard that one of your fellows bolted, and ran right into the jaws of the lion I laughed I still laugh

LAVINIA Then you don't understand what that meant?

THE CAPTAIN It meant that the lion had a cur for his breakfast.

LAVINIA It meant more than that, Captain It meant that a man cannot die for a story and a dream None of us believed the stories and the dreams more devoutly than poor Spintho; but he could not face the great reality What he would have called my faith has been oozing away minute by minute whilst I've been sitting here, with death coming nearer and nearer, with reality become realer and realer, with stories and dreams fading away into nothing.

THE CAPTAIN. Are you then going to die for nothing?

LAVINIA. Yes that is the wonderful thing It is since all the stories and dreams have gone that I have now no doubt at all that I must die for something greater than dreams or stories

THE CAPTAIN. But for what?

LAVINIA I don't know If it were for anything small enough to know, it would be too small to die for I think I'm going to die for God Nothing else is real enough to die for.

THE CAPTAIN What is God?

LAVINIA When we know that, Captain, we shall be gods ourselves

THE CAPTAIN Lavinia, come down to earth Burn the incense and marry me.

LAVINIA. Handsome Captain: would you marry me if I hauled down the flag in the day of battle and burnt the incense? Sons take after their mothers, you know. Do you want your son to be a coward?

THE CAPTAIN [*strongly moved*] By great Diana, I think I would strangle you if you gave in now.

LAVINIA [*putting her hand on the head of Androcles*] The hand of God is on us three, Captain

THE CAPTAIN What nonsense it all is! And what a monstrous thing that you should die for such nonsense, and that I should look on helplessly when my whole soul cries out against it! Die then if you must, but at least I can cut the Emperor's throat and then my own when I see your blood

The Emperor throws open the door of his box

angrily, and appears in wrath on the threshold The Editor, the Call Boy, and the gladiators spring to their feet

THE EMPEROR The Christians will not fight; and your curs cannot get their blood up to attack them It's all that fellow with the blazing eyes Send for the whip [*The Call Boy rushes out on the east side for the whip*] If that will not move them, bring the hot irons The man is like a mountain [*He returns angrily into the box and slams the door*]

The Call Boy returns with a man in a hideous Etruscan mask, carrying a whip They both rush down the passage into the arena

LAVINIA [*rising*] Oh, that is unworthy Can they not kill him without dishonoring him?

ANDROCLES [*scrambling to his feet and running into the middle of the space between the staircases*] It's dreadful Now I want to fight I can't bear the sight of a whip The only time I ever hit a man was when he lashed an old horse with a whip It was terrible: I danced on his face when he was on the ground He mustn't strike Ferrovius I'll go into the arena and kill him first. [*He makes a wild dash into the passage. As he does so a great clamor is heard from the arena, ending in wild applause. The gladiators listen and look inquiringly at one another*]

THE EDITOR Whats up now?

LAVINIA [*to the Captain*] What has happened, do you think?

THE CAPTAIN. What can happen? They are killing them, I suppose

ANDROCLES [*running in through the passage, screaming with horror and hiding his eyes*]

LAVINIA. Androcles, Androcles. what's the matter?

ANDROCLES. Oh don't ask me, don't ask me. Something too dreadful Oh! [*He crouches by her and hides his face in her robe, sobbing*]

THE CALL BOY [*rushing through from the passage as before*] Ropes and hooks there! Ropes and hooks!

THE EDITOR Well, need you excite yourself about it? [*Another burst of applause*]

Two slaves in Etruscan masks, with ropes and drag hooks, hurry in.

ONE OF THE SLAVES How many dead?

THE CALL BOY SIX. [*The slave blows a whistle twice, and four more masked slaves rush through into the arena with the same apparatus*] And the basket Bring the baskets [*The slave whistles three times, and runs through the passage with his companion*].

THE CAPTAIN. Who are the baskets for?

THE CALL BOY For the whip He's in pieces. They're all in pieces, more or less [*Lavinia hides her face*]

Two more masked slaves come in with a basket and follow the others into the arena, as the Call Boy turns to the gladiators and exclaims, exhausted] Boys he's killed the lot

THE EMPEROR [*again bursting from his box, this time in an ecstasy of delight*] Where is he? Magnificent! He shall have a laurel crown

Ferrovius, madly waving his bloodstained sword, rushes through the passage in despair, followed by his co-religionists, and by the menagerie keeper, who goes to the gladiators. The gladiators draw their swords nervously]

FERROVIUS Lost! lost for ever! I have betrayed my Master. Cut off this right hand it has offended. Ye have swords, my brethren strike

LAVINIA No, no What have you done, Ferrovius?

FERROVIUS. I know not but there was blood behind my eyes, and there's blood on my sword. What does that mean?

THE EMPEROR [*enthusiastically, on the landing outside his box*] What does it mean? It means that you are the greatest man in Rome. It means that you shall have a laurel crown of gold. Superb fighter. I could almost yield you my throne. It is a record for my reign. I shall live in history. Once, in Domitian's time, a Gaul slew three men in the arena and gained his freedom. But when before has one naked man slain six armed men of the bravest and best? The persecution shall cease if Christians can fight like this, I shall have none but Christians to fight for me [*To the Gladiators*] You are ordered to become Christians, you there do you hear?

RETIARIUS It is all one to us, Caesar. Had I been there with my net, the story would have been different.

THE CAPTAIN [*suddenly seizing Lavinia by the wrist and dragging her up the steps to the Emperor*] Caesar this woman is the sister of Ferrovius. If she is thrown to the lions he will fret. He will lose weight, get out of condition—

THE EMPEROR. The lions? Nonsense! [*To Lavinia*] Madam. I am proud to have the honor of making your acquaintance. Your brother is the glory of Rome.

LAVINIA. But my friends here. Must they die?

THE EMPEROR. Die! Certainly not. There

has never been the slightest idea of harming them. Ladies and gentlemen, you are all free. Pray go into the front of the house and enjoy the spectacle to which your brother has so splendidly contributed. Captain, oblige me by conducting them to the seats reserved for my personal friends.

THE MENAGERIE KEEPER Caesar. I must have one Christian for the lion. The people have been promised it; and they will tear the decorations to bits if they are disappointed.

THE EMPEROR. True, true. We must have somebody for the new lion.

FERROVIUS. Throw me to him. Let the apostate perish.

THE EMPEROR. No, no, you would tear him in pieces, my friend, and we cannot afford to throw away lions as if they were mere slaves. But we must have somebody. This is really extremely awkward.

THE MENAGERIE KEEPER. Why not that little Greek chap? He's not a Christian. He's a sorcerer.

THE EMPEROR. The very thing he will do very well.

THE CALL BOY [*issuing from the passage*] Number twelve. The Christian for the new lion.

ANDROCLES [*rising, and pulling himself sadly together*] Well, it was to be, after all.

LAVINIA. I'll go in his place, Caesar. Ask the Captain whether they do not like best to see a woman torn to pieces. He told me so yesterday.

THE EMPEROR. There is something in that. There is certainly something in that—if only I could feel sure that your brother would not fret.

ANDROCLES. No. I should never have another happy hour. No on the faith of a Christian and the honor of a tailor, I accept the lot that has fallen on me. If my wife turns up, give her my love and say that my wish was that she should be happy with her next, poor fellow! Caesar go to your box and see how a tailor can die. Make way for number twelve there [*He marches out along the passage*].

The vast audience in the amphitheatre now sees the Emperor re-enter his box and take his place as Androcles, desperately frightened, but still marching with piteous devotion, emerges from the other end of the passage, and finds himself at the focus of thousands of eager eyes. The lion's cage, with a heavy portcullis grating, is on his left. The Emperor gives a signal. A gong sounds

Androcles shivers at the sound, then falls on his knees and prays. The grating rises with a clash. The lion bounds into the arena. He rushes round frisking in his freedom. He sees Androcles. He stops, rises stiffly by straightening his legs; stretches out his nose forward and his tail in a horizontal line behind, like a pointer, and utters an appalling roar. Androcles crouches and hides his face in his hands. The lion gathers himself for a spring, swishing his tail to and fro through the dust in an ecstasy of anticipation. Androcles throws up his hands in supplication to heaven. The lion checks at the sight of Androcles's face. He then steals towards him; smells him; arches his back, purrs like a motor car, finally rubs himself against Androcles, knocking him over. Androcles, supporting himself on his wrist, looks affrightedly at the lion. The lion limps on three paws, holding up the other as if it was wounded. A flash of recognition lights up the face of Androcles. He flaps his hand as if it had a thorn in it, and pretends to pull the thorn out and to hurt himself. The lion nods repeatedly. Androcles holds out his hands to the lion, who gives him both paws, which he shakes with enthusiasm. They embrace rapturously, finally waltz round the arena amid a sudden burst of deafening applause, and out through the passage, the Emperor watching them in breathless astonishment until they disappear, when he rushes from his box and descends the steps in frantic excitement.

THE EMPEROR My friends, an incredible! an amazing thing! has happened. I can no longer doubt the truth of Christianity. [*The Christians press to him joyfully*] This Christian sorcerer—[*with a yell, he breaks off as he sees Androcles and the lion emerge from the passage, waltzing. He bolts wildly up the steps into his box, and slams the door. All, Christians and gladiators alike, fly for their lives, the gladiators bolting into the arena, the others in all directions. The place is emptied with magical suddenness*]

ANDROCLES [*naïvely*] Now I wonder why they all run away from us like that. [*The lion, combining a series of yawns, purrs, and roars, achieves something very like a laugh*]

THE EMPEROR [*standing on a chair inside his box and looking over the wall*] Sorcerer! I command you to put that lion to death instantly. It is guilty of high treason. Your conduct is most disgra—[*the lion charges at him up the stairs*] help! [*He disappears. The lion rears against the box, looks over the partition at him; and roars. The Emperor darts out through the*

door and down to Androcles, pursued by the lion]

ANDROCLES Dont run away, sir! he cant help springing if you run. [*He seizes the Emperor and gets between him and the lion, who stops at once*] Dont be afraid of him.

THE EMPEROR I am not afraid of him. [*The lion crouches, growling. The Emperor clutches Androcles*] Keep between us.

ANDROCLES Never be afraid of animals, your worship: thats the great secret. He'll be as gentle as a lamb when he knows that you are his friend. Stand quite still; and smile; and let him smell you all over just to reassure him, for, you see, he's afraid of you; and he must examine you thoroughly before he gives you his confidence. [*To the lion*] Come now, Tommy; and speak nicely to the Emperor, the great good Emperor who has power to have all our heads cut off if we dont behave very very respectfully to him.

The lion utters a fearful roar. The Emperor dashes madly up the steps, across the landing, and down again on the other side, with the lion in hot pursuit. Androcles rushes after the lion; overtakes him as he is descending, and throws himself on his back, trying to use his toes—as a brake. Before he can stop him the lion gets hold of the trailing end of the Emperor's robe.

ANDROCLES Oh bad wicked Tommy, to chase the Emperor like that! Let go the Emperor's robe at once, sir. wheres your manners? [*The lion growls and worries the robe*] Dont pull it away from him, your worship. He's only playing. Now I shall be really angry with you, Tommy, if you dont let go. [*The lion growls again*] I'll tell you what it is, sir: he thinks you and I are not friends.

THE EMPEROR [*trying to undo the clasp of his brooch*] Friends! You infernal scoundrel [*the lion growls*]—dont let him go. Curse this brooch! I cant get it loose.

ANDROCLES We mustnt let him lash himself into a rage. You must shew him that you are my particular friend—if you will have the condescension. [*He seizes the Emperor's hands and shakes them cordially*] Look, Tommy the nice Emperor is the dearest friend Andy Wandy has in the whole world. he loves him like a brother.

THE EMPEROR You little brute, you damned filthy little dog of a Greek tailor. I'll have you burnt alive for daring to touch the divine person of the Emperor. [*The lion growls*]

ANDROCLES Oh dont talk like that, sir. He understands every word you say all animals do they take it from the tone of your voice [*The lion growls and lashes his tail*] I think he's going to spring at your worship. If you wouldnt mind saying something affectionate [*The lion roars*]

THE EMPEROR [*shaking Androcles's hands frantically*] My dearest Mr Androcles, my sweetest friend, my long lost brother, come to my arms [*He embraces Androcles*] Oh, what an abominable smell of garlic!

The lion lets go the robe and rolls over on his back, clasping his forepaws over one another coquettishly above his nose

ANDROCLES There! You see, your worship, a child might play with him now. See! [*He tickles the lion's belly. The lion wriggles ecstatically*] Come and pet him

THE EMPEROR I must conquer these unkingly terrors. Mind you dont go away from him, though [*He pats the lion's chest*]

ANDROCLES Oh, sir, how few men would have the courage to do that!

THE EMPEROR Yes it takes a bit of nerve. Let us have the Court in and frighten them. Is he safe, do you think?

ANDROCLES Quite safe now, sir

THE EMPEROR [*majestically*] What ho, there! All who are within hearing, return without fear. Caesar has tamed the lion [*All the fugitives steal cautiously in. The menagerie keeper comes from the passage with other keepers armed with iron bars and tridents*] Take those things away. I have subdued the beast. [*He places his foot on it*]

FERROVIUS [*timidly approaching the Emperor and looking down with awe on the lion*] It is strange that I, who fear no man, should fear a lion

THE CAPTAIN Every man fears something, Ferrovius

THE EMPEROR How about the Pretorian Guard now?

FERROVIUS In my youth I worshipped Mars, the God of War. I turned from him to serve the Christian god, but today the Christian god forsook me, and Mars overcame me and took back his own. The Christian god is not yet. He will come when Mars and I are dust, but meanwhile I must serve the gods that are, not the God that will be. Until then I accept service in the Guard, Caesar

THE EMPEROR Very wisely said. All really sensible men agree that the prudent course

is to be neither bigoted in our attachment to the old nor rash and unpractical in keeping an open mind for the new, but to make the best of both dispensations

THE CAPTAIN What do you say, Lavinia? Will you too be prudent?

LAVINIA [*on the stairs*] No. I'll strive for the coming of the God who is not yet.

THE CAPTAIN May I come and argue with you occasionally?

LAVINIA Yes, handsome Captain you may. [*He kisses her hand*]

THE EMPEROR And now, my friends, though I do not, as you see, fear this lion, yet the strain of his presence is considerable, for none of us can feel quite sure what he will do next

THE MENAGERIE KEEPER Caesar give us this Greek sorcerer to be a slave in the menagerie. He has a way with the beasts

ANDROCLES [*distressed*] Not if they are in cages. They should not be kept in cages. They must all be let out

THE EMPEROR I give this sorcerer to be a slave to the first man who lays hands on him [*The menagerie keepers and the gladiators rush for Androcles. The lion starts up and faces them. They surge back*] You see how magnanimous we Romans are, Androcles. We suffer you to go in peace

ANDROCLES I thank your worship. I thank you all, ladies and gentlemen. Come, Tommy. Whilst we stand together, no cage for you no slavery for me. [*He goes out with the lion, everybody crowding away to give him as wide a berth as possible*]

* * * * *

In this play I have presented one of the Roman persecutions of the early Christians, not as the conflict of a false theology with a true, but as what all such persecutions essentially are: an attempt to suppress a propaganda that seemed to threaten the interests involved in the established law and order, organized and maintained in the name of religion and justice by politicians who are pure opportunists. Have-and-Holders. People who are shewn by their inner light the possibility of a better world based on the demand of the spirit for a nobler and more abundant life, not for themselves at the expense of others, but for everybody, are naturally dreaded and therefore hated by the Have-and-Holders, who keep always in reserve two

sure weapons against them. The first is a persecution effected by the provocation, organization, and arming of that herd instinct which makes men abhor all departures from custom, and, by the most cruel punishments and the wildest calumnies, force eccentric people to behave and profess exactly as other people do. The second is by leading the herd to war, which immediately and infallibly makes them forget everything, even their most cherished and hardwon public liberties and private interests, in the irresistible surge of their pugnacity and the tense preoccupation of their terror.

There is no reason to believe that there was anything more in the Roman persecutions than this. The attitude of the Roman Emperor and the officers of his staff towards the opinions at issue were much the same as those of a modern British Home Secretary towards members of the lower middle classes when some pious policeman charges them with Bad Taste, technically called blasphemy. Bad Taste being a violation of Good Taste, which in such matters practically means Hypocrisy. The Home Secretary and the judges who try the case are usually far more sceptical and blasphemous than the poor men whom they persecute; and their professions of horror at the blunt utterance of their own opinions are revolting to those behind the scenes who have any genuine religious sensibility, but the thing is done because the governing classes, provided only the law against blasphemy is not applied to themselves, strongly approve of such persecution because it enables them to represent their own privileges as part of the religion of the country.

Therefore my martyrs are the martyrs of all time, and my persecutors the persecutors of all time. My Emperor, who has no sense of the value of common people's lives, and amuses himself with killing as carelessly as with sparing, is the sort of monster you can make of any silly-clever gentleman by idolizing him. We are still so easily imposed on by such idols that one of the leading pastors of the Free Churches in London denounced my play on the ground that my persecuting Emperor is a very fine fellow, and the persecuted Christians ridiculous. From which I conclude that a popular pulpit may be as perilous to a man's soul as an imperial throne.

All my articulate Christians, the reader

will notice, have different enthusiasms, which they accept as the same religion only because it involves them in a common opposition to the official religion and consequently in a common doom. Androcles is a humanitarian naturalist, whose views surprise everybody. Lavinia, a clever and fearless freethinker, shocks the Pauline Ferrovius, who is comparatively stupid and conscience ridden. Spyntho, the blackguardly debauchee, is presented as one of the typical Christians of that period on the authority of St Augustine, who seems to have come to the conclusion at one period of his development that most Christians were what we call wrong uns. No doubt he was to some extent right. I have had occasion often to point out that revolutionary movements attract those who are not good enough for established institutions as well as those who are too good for them.

But the most striking aspect of the play at this moment is the terrible topicality given it by the war. We were at peace when I pointed out, by the mouth of Ferrovius, the path of an honest man who finds out, when the trumpet sounds, that he cannot follow Jesus. Many years earlier, in *The Devil's Disciple*, I touched the same theme even more definitely, and shewed the minister throwing off his black coat for ever when he discovered, amid the thunder of the captains and the shouting, that he was a born fighter. Great numbers of our clergy have found themselves of late in the position of Ferrovius and Anthony Anderson. They have discovered that they hate not only their enemies but everyone who does not share their hatred, and that they want to fight and to force other people to fight. They have turned their churches into recruiting stations and their vestries into munition workshops. But it has never occurred to them to take off their black coats and say quite simply, "I find in the hour of trial that the Sermon on the Mount is tosh, and that I am not a Christian. I apologize for all the unpatriotic nonsense I have been preaching all these years. Have the goodness to give me a revolver and a commission in a regiment which has for its chaplain a priest of the god Mars. *my God*." Not a bit of it. They have stuck to their livings and served Mars in the name of Christ, to the scandal of all religious mankind. When the Archbishop of York behaved like a gentleman and the Head

Master of Eton preached a Christian sermon, and were reviled by the rabble, the Martian parsons encouraged the rabble. For this they made no apologies or excuses, good or bad. They simply indulged their passions, just as they had always indulged their class prejudices and commercial interests, without troubling themselves for a moment as to whether they were Christians or not. They did not protest even when a body calling itself the Anti-German League (not having noticed, apparently, that it had been anticipated by the British Empire, the French Republic, and the Kingdoms of Italy, Japan, and Serbia) actually succeeded in closing a church at Forest Hill in which God was worshipped in the German language. One would have supposed that this grotesque outrage on the commonest decencies of religion would have provoked a remonstrance from even the worldliest bench of bishops. But no, apparently it seemed to the bishops as natural that the House of God should be looted when He allowed German to be spoken in it as that a baker's shop with a German name over the door should be pillaged. Their verdict was, in effect, "Serve God right, for creating the Germans!" The incident would have been impossible in a country where the Church was as powerful as the Church of England, had it had at the same time a spark of catholic as distinguished from tribal religion in it. As it is, the thing occurred, and as far as I have observed, the only people who gasped were the Free-thinkers.

Thus we see that even among men who make a profession of religion the great majority are as Martian as the majority of their congregations. The average clergyman is an official who makes his living by christening babies, marrying adults, conducting a ritual, and making the best he can (when he has any conscience about it) of a certain routine of school superintendence, district visiting, and organization of almsgiving, which does not necessarily touch Christianity at any point except the point of the tongue. The exceptional or religious clergyman may be an ardent Pauline salvationist, in which case his more cultivated parishioners dislike him, and say that he ought to have joined the Methodists. Or he may be an artist expressing religious emotion without intellectual definition by means of poetry,

music, vestments, and architecture, also producing religious ecstasy by physical expedients, such as fasts and vigils, in which case he is denounced as a Ritualist. Or he may be either a Unitarian Deist like Voltaire or Tom Paine, or the more modern sort of Anglican Theosophist to whom the Holy Ghost is the Élan Vital of Bergson and the Father and Son are an expression of the fact that our functions and aspects are manifold, and that we are all sons and all either potential or actual parents, in which case he is strongly suspected by the straiter Salvationists of being little better than an Atheist. All these varieties, you see, excite remark. They may be very popular with their congregations, but they are regarded by the average man as the freaks of the Church. The Church, like the society of which it is an organ, is balanced and steadied by the great central Philistine mass above whom theology looms as a highly spoken of and doubtless most important thing, like Greek Tragedy, or classical music, or the higher mathematics, but who are very glad when church is over and they can go home to lunch or dinner, having in fact, for all practical purposes, no reasoned convictions at all, and being equally ready to persecute a poor Free-thinker for saying that St James was not infallible, and to send one of the Peculiar People to prison for being so very peculiar as to take St James seriously.

In short, a Christian martyr was thrown to the lions not because he was a Christian, but because he was a crank—that is, an unusual sort of person. And multitudes of people, quite as civilized and amiable as we, crowded to see the lions eat him just as they now crowd the lion-house in the Zoo at feeding-time, not because they really cared twopence about Diana or Christ, or could have given you any intelligent or correct account of the things Diana and Christ stood against one another for, but simply because they wanted to see a curious and exciting spectacle. You, dear reader, have probably run to see a fire; and if somebody came in now and told you that a lion was chasing a man down the street you would rush to the window. And if anyone were to say that you were as cruel as the people who let the lion loose on the man, you would be justly indignant. Now that we may no longer see a man hanged, we assemble outside the jail to see the black flag

run up That is our duller method of enjoying ourselves in the old Roman spirit And if the Government decided to throw persons of unpopular or eccentric views to the lions in the Albert Hall or the Earl's Court stadium tomorrow, can you doubt that all the seats would be crammed, mostly by people who could not give you the most superficial account of the views in question. Much less unlikely things have happened It is true that if such a revival does take place soon, the martyrs will not be members of heretical religious sects they will be Peculiars, Anti-Vivisectionists, Flat-Earth men, scoffers at the laboratories, or infidels who refuse to kneel down when a procession of doctors goes by But the lions will hurt them just as much, and the spectators will enjoy themselves just as much, as the Roman lions and spectators

used to do

It was currently reported in the Berlin newspapers that when Androcles was first performed in Berlin, the Crown Prince rose and left the house, unable to endure the (I hope) very clear and fair exposition of autocratic Imperialism given by the Roman captain to his Christian prisoners No English Imperialist was intelligent and earnest enough to do the same in London If the report is correct, I confirm the logic of the Crown Prince, and am glad to find myself so well understood But I can assure him that the Empire which served for my model when I wrote Androcles was, as he is now finding to his cost, much nearer my home than the German one.

THE END

XXII OVERRULED

1912

A lady and gentleman are sitting together on a chesterfield in a retired corner of the lounge of a seaside hotel It is a summer night the French window behind them stands open The terrace without overlooks a moonlit harbor. The lounge is dark. The chesterfield, upholstered in silver grey, and the two figures on it in evening dress, catch the light from an arc lamp somewhere, but the walls, covered with a dark green paper, are in gloom There are two stray chairs, one on each side On the gentleman's right, behind him up near the window, is an unused fireplace Opposite it on the lady's left is a door. The gentleman is on the lady's right

The lady is very attractive, with a musical voice and soft appealing manners. She is young—that is, one feels sure that she is under thirty-five and over twenty-four. The gentleman does not look much older He is rather handsome, and has ventured as far in the direction of poetic dandyism in the arrangement of his hair as any man who is not a professional artist can afford to in England He is obviously very much in love with the lady, and is, in fact, yielding to an irresistible impulse to throw his arms round her.

THE LADY Dont—oh dont be horrid Please, Mr Lunn [*she rises from the lounge and retreats behind it*] Promise me you wont be horrid

GREGORY LUNN. I'm not being horrid, Mrs Juno. I'm not going to be horrid I love you: thats all I'm extraordinarily happy.

MRS JUNO You will really be good?

GREGORY I'll be whatever you wish me to be. I tell you I love you I love loving you I dont want to be tired and sorry, as I should be if I were to be horrid I dont want you to be tired and sorry. Do come and sit down again

MRS JUNO [*coming back to her seat*] You're sure you dont want anything you oughtnt to?

GREGORY. Quite sure I only want you [*she recoils*] Dont be alarmed I like wanting you As long as I have a want, I have a reason for living Satisfaction is death

MRS JUNO Yes; but the impulse to commit suicide is sometimes irresistible.

GREGORY. Not with you.

MRS JUNO What!

GREGORY. Oh, it sounds uncomplimentary; but it isnt really Do you know why half the couples who find themselves situated as we are now behave horribly?

MRS JUNO Because they cant help it if they let things go too far.

GREGORY Not a bit of it. It's because they have nothing else to do, and no other way of entertaining each other You dont know

what it is to be alone with a woman who has little beauty and less conversation. What is a man to do? She can't talk interestingly; and if he talks that way himself she doesn't understand him. He can't look at her, if he does, he only finds out that she isn't beautiful. Before the end of five minutes they are both hideously bored. There's only one thing that can save the situation, and that's what you call being horrid. With a beautiful, witty, kind woman, there's no time for such follies. It's so delightful to look at her, to listen to her voice, to hear all she has to say, that nothing else happens. That is why the woman who is supposed to have a thousand lovers seldom has one, whilst the stupid, graceless animals of women have dozens.

MRS JUNO I wonder! It's quite true that when one feels in danger one talks like mad to stave it off, even when one doesn't quite want to stave it off.

GREGORY One never does quite want to stave it off. Danger is delicious. But death isn't. We court the danger, but the real delight is in escaping, after all.

MRS JUNO I don't think we'll talk about it any more. Danger is all very well when you do escape, but sometimes one doesn't. I tell you frankly I don't feel as safe as you do—if you really do.

GREGORY But surely you can do as you please without injuring anyone, Mrs Juno. That is the whole secret of your extraordinary charm for me.

MRS JUNO I don't understand.

GREGORY Well, I hardly know how to begin to explain. But the root of the matter is that I am what people call a good man.

MRS JUNO I thought so until you began making love to me.

GREGORY But you knew I loved you all along.

MRS JUNO Yes, of course, but I depended on you not to tell me so, because I thought you were good. Your blurting it out spoils it. And it was wicked besides.

GREGORY Not at all. You see, it's a great many years since I've been able to allow myself to fall in love. I know lots of charming women, but the worst of it is, they're all married. Women don't become charming, to my taste, until they're fully developed, and by that time, if they're really nice, they're snapped up and married. And then, because I am a good man, I have to place a limit to

my regard for them. I may be forti-
enough to gain friendship and even
warm affection from them, but my love
their husbands and their hearths and
happiness obliges me to draw a line and
overstep it. Of course I value such affection
regard very highly indeed. I am surround-
ed with women who are most dear to me,
every one of them has a post sticking in
I may put it that way, with the inscription
Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted. How we
loathe that notice! In every lovely garden
in every dell full of primroses, on every
hillside, we meet that confounded board.
There is always a gamekeeper round
corner. But what is that to the horror
meeting it on every beautiful woman,
knowing that there is a husband round
corner? I have had this accursed board
sting between me and every dear and desirable
woman until I thought I had lost the pleasure
of letting myself fall really and whole-
heartedly in love.

MRS JUNO Wasn't there a widow?

GREGORY No. Widows are extraordinary
scarce in modern society. Husbands
longer than they used to, and even when
they do die, their widows have a string of
names down for their next.

MRS JUNO Well, what about the young girls?

GREGORY Oh, who cares for young girls?
They're unsympathetic. They're beginning
They don't attract me. I'm afraid of them.

MRS JUNO That's the correct thing to
do to a woman of my age. But it doesn't explain
why you seem to have put your scruple
in your pocket when you met me.

GREGORY Surely that's quite clear. I—

MRS JUNO No, please don't explain. I
want to know. I take your word for it.
Besides, it doesn't matter now. Our voyage
is over, and tomorrow I start for the north
my poor father's place.

GREGORY [*surprised*] Your poor father
thought he was alive.

MRS JUNO So he is. What made you think
he wasn't?

GREGORY You said your poor father

MRS JUNO Oh, that's a trick of mine. Rat
a silly trick, I suppose, but there's something
pathetic to me about men. I find myself
calling them poor. So-and-So when the
nothing whatever the matter with them.

GREGORY [*who has listened in growing alarm*]
But—I—is?—wa—? Oh Lord!

MRS JUNO Whats the matter?

GREGORY Nothing

MRS JUNO Nothing! [*Rising anxiously*] Non-sense youre ill

GREGORY No It was something about your late husband—

MRS JUNO My late husband! What do you mean? [*Clutching him, horror-stricken*] Dont tell me he's dead.

GREGORY [*rising, equally appalled*] Dont tell me he's alive

MRS JUNO Oh, dont frighten me like this. Of course he's alive—unless youve heard anything.

GREGORY The first day we met—on the boat—you spoke to me of your poor dear husband

MRS JUNO [*releasing him, quite reassured*] Is that all?

GREGORY Well, afterwards you called him poor Tops Always poor Tops, or poor dear Tops. What could I think?

MRS JUNO [*sitting down again*] I wish you hadnt given me such a shock about him; for I havnt been treating him at all well Neither have you.

GREGORY [*relapsing into his seat, overwhelmed*] And you mean to tell me youre not a widow!

MRS JUNO Gracious, no! I'm not in black.

GREGORY. Then I have been behaving like a blackguard! I have broken my promise to my mother I shall never have an easy conscience again

MRS JUNO I'm sorry I thought you knew

GREGORY. You thought I was a libertine?

MRS JUNO. No. of course I shouldnt have spoken to you if I had thought that I thought you liked me, but that you knew, and would be good

GREGORY [*stretching his hands towards her breast*] I thought the burden of being good had fallen from my soul at last I saw nothing there but a bosom to rest on the bosom of a lovely woman of whom I could dream without guilt What do I see now?

MRS JUNO Just what you saw before

GREGORY [*despairingly*] No, no

MRS JUNO What else?

GREGORY Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted
Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted

MRS JUNO. They wont if they hold their tongues Dont be such a coward My husband wont eat you

GREGORY I'm not afraid of your husband I'm afraid of my conscience.

MRS JUNO [*losing patience*] Well! I dont consider myself at all a badly behaved woman, for nothing has passed between us that was not perfectly nice and friendly; but really! to hear a grown-up man talking about promises to his mother!—

GREGORY [*interrupting her*] Yes, yes: I know all about that It's not romantic it's not Don Juan it's not advanced; but we feel it all the same It's far deeper in our blood and bones than all the romantic stuff My father got into a scandal once that was why my mother made me promise never to make love to a married woman And now Ive done it I cant feel honest Dont pretend to despise me or laugh at me You feel it too You said just now that your own conscience was uneasy when you thought of your husband What must it be when you think of my wife?

MRS JUNO [*rising aghast*] Your wife!! You dont dare sit there and tell me coolly that youre a married man!

GREGORY I never led you to believe I was unmarried.

MRS JUNO Oh! You never gave me the faintest hint that you had a wife

GREGORY. I did indeed I discussed things with you that only married people really understand

MRS JUNO Oh!!

GREGORY I thought it the most delicate way of letting you know.

MRS JUNO Well, you are a daisy, I must say I suppose thats vulgar, but really! really!! You and your goodness! However, now weve found one another out theres only one thing to be done Will you please go?

GREGORY [*rising slowly*] I ought to go

MRS JUNO Well, go

GREGORY Yes Er—[*he tries to go*] I—I somehow cant [*He sits down again helplessly*] My conscience is active my will is paralyzed. This is really dreadful. Would you mind ringing the bell and asking them to throw me out? You ought to, you know.

MRS JUNO What! make a scandal in the face of the whole hotel! Certainly not Dont be a fool.

GREGORY Yes, but I cant go

MRS JUNO Then I can Goodbye

GREGORY [*clinging to her hand*] Can you really?

MRS JUNO Of course I—[*she wavers*] Oh dear! [*They contemplate one another helplessly*] I cant. [*She sinks on the lounge, hand in hand*]

with him]

GREGORY For heaven's sake pull yourself together It's a question of self-control

MRS JUNO [*dragging her hand away and retreating to the end of the chesterfield*] No it's a question of distance Self-control is all very well two or three yards off, or on a ship, with everybody looking on Dont come any nearer

GREGORY This is a ghastly business I want to go away, and I cant.

MRS JUNO I think you ought to go [*he makes an effort, and she adds quickly*] but if you try to I shall grab you round the neck and disgrace myself I implore you to sit still and be nice

GREGORY I implore you to run away I believe I can trust myself to let you go for your own sake But it will break my heart

MRS JUNO I dont want to break your heart I cant bear to think of your sitting here alone I cant bear to think of sitting alone myself somewhere else It's so senseless—so ridiculous—when we might be so happy I dont want to be wicked, or coarse But I like you very much, and I do want to be affectionate and human

GREGORY I ought to draw a line

MRS JUNO So you shall, dear Tell me: do you really like me? I dont mean love me you might love the housemaid—

GREGORY [*vehemently*] No!

MRS JUNO Oh yes you might, and what does that matter, anyhow? Are you really fond of me? Are we friends—comrades? Would you be sorry if I died?

GREGORY [*shrinking*] Oh dont.

MRS JUNO Or was it the usual aimless man's lark a mere shipboard flirtation?

GREGORY Oh no, no nothing half so bad, so vulgar, so wrong I assure you I only meant to be agreeable It grew on me before I noticed it

MRS JUNO And you were glad to let it grow?

GREGORY I let it grow because the board was not up

MRS JUNO Bother the board! I am just as fond of Sibthorpe as—

GREGORY Sibthorpe!

MRS JUNO Sibthorpe is my husband's Christian name I oughtnt to call him Tops to you now

GREGORY [*chuckling*] It sounded like something to drink. But I have no right to laugh at him My Christian name is Gregory,

which sounds like a powder.

MRS JUNO [*chilled*] That is so like a man! I offer you my heart's warmest friendliest feeling; and you think of nothing but a silly joke A quip like that makes you forget me

GREGORY Forget you! Oh, if only I could!

MRS JUNO If you could, would you?

GREGORY [*burying his shamed face in his hands*] No I'd die first. Oh, I hate myself

MRS JUNO I glory in myself It's so jolly to be reckless Can a man be reckless, I wonder?

GREGORY [*straightening himself desperately*] No I'm not reckless I know what I'm doing my conscience is awake Oh, where is the intoxication of love? the delirium? the madness that makes a man think the world well lost for the woman he adores? I dont think anything of the sort I see that it's not worth it I know that it's wrong I have never in my life been cooler, more businesslike

MRS JUNO [*opening her arms to him*] But you cant resist me

GREGORY I must I ought. [*Throwing himself into her arms*] Oh my darling, my treasure, we shall be sorry for this

MRS JUNO We can forgive ourselves Could we forgive ourselves if we let this moment slip?

GREGORY I protest to the last. I'm against this I have been pushed over a precipice I'm innocent This wild joy, this exquisite tenderness, this ascent into heaven can thrill me to the uttermost fibre of my heart [*with a gesture of ecstasy she hides her face on his shoulder*], but it cant subdue my mind or corrupt my conscience, which still shouts to the skies that I'm not a willing party to this outrageous conduct. I repudiate the bliss with which you are filling me

MRS JUNO Never mind your conscience. Tell me how happy you are.

GREGORY No I recall you to your duty But oh, I will give you my life with both hands if you can tell me that you feel for me one millionth part of what I feel for you now

MRS JUNO Oh yes, yes Be satisfied with that Ask for no more Let me go

GREGORY I cant I have no will Something stronger than either of us is in command here Nothing on earth or in heaven can part us now You know that, dont you?

MRS JUNO Oh, dont make me say it Of course I know Nothing—not life nor death nor shame nor anything can part us

A MATTER-OF-FACT MALE VOICE IN THE CORRI-

DOR. All right This must be it.

The two recover with a violent start; release one another, and spring back to opposite sides of the lounge

GREGORY. That did it

MRS JUNO [*in a thrilling whisper*] Sh-sh-sh! That was my husband's voice

GREGORY Impossible: it's only our guilty fancy

A WOMAN'S VOICE This is the way to the lounge. I know it

GREGORY Great Heaven! we're both mad Thats my wife's voice

MRS JUNO Ridiculous! Oh, we're dreaming it all We—[*the door opens, and Sibthorpe Juno appears in the roseate glow of the corridor (which happens to be papered in pink) with Mrs Lunn, like Tannhäuser in the hall of Venus. He is a fussily energetic little man, who gives himself an air of gallantry by greasing the points of his moustaches and dressing very carefully She is a tall, imposing, handsome, languid woman, with flashing dark eyes and long lashes They make for the chesterfield, not noticing the two palpitating figures blotted against the walls in the gloom on either side The figures flit away noiselessly through the window and disappear*]

JUNO [*officially*] Ah here we are [*He leads the way to the sofa*] Sit down I'm sure youre tired [*She sits*] Thats right [*He sits beside her on her left*]. Hullo! [*he rises*] this sofa's quite warm

MRS LUNN [*bored*] Is it? I dont notice it I expect the sun's been on it

JUNO I felt it quite distinctly I'm more thinly clad than you [*He sits down again, and proceeds, with a sigh of satisfaction*] What a relief to get off the ship and have a private room! Thats the worst of a ship. Youre under observation all the time.

MRS LUNN But why not?

JUNO Well, of course theres no reason. at least I suppose not But, you know, part of the romance of a journey is that a man keeps imagining that something might happen; and he cant do that if there are a lot of people about and it simply cant happen.

MRS LUNN. Mr Juno. romance is all very well on board ship, but when your foot touches the soil of England theres an end of it

JUNO. No believe me, thats a foreigner's mistake we are the most romantic people in the world, we English Whv. my very pre-

MRS LUNN [*faintly ironical*] Indeed?

JUNO Yes. Youve guessed, of course, that I'm a married man

MRS LUNN Oh, thats all right I'm a married woman.

JUNO Thank Heaven for that! To my English mind, passion is not real passion without guilt. I am a red-blooded man, Mrs Lunn: I cant help it The tragedy of my life is that I married, when quite young, a woman whom I couldnt help being very fond of I longed for a guilty passion—for the real thing—the wicked thing, and yet I couldnt care twopence for any other woman when my wife was about Year after year went by I felt my youth slipping away without ever having had a romance in my life; for marriage is all very well, but it isnt romance. Theres nothing wrong in it, you see.

MRS LUNN Poor man! How you must have suffered!

JUNO No that was what was so tame about it. I wanted to suffer. You get so sick of being happily married It's always the happy marriages that break up At last my wife and I agreed that we ought to take a holiday.

MRS LUNN Hadnt you holidays every year?

JUNO Oh, the seaside and so on! Thats not what we meant. We meant a holiday from one another

MRS LUNN How very odd!

JUNO. She said it was an excellent idea, that domestic felicity was making us perfectly idiotic, that she wanted a holiday too. So we agreed to go round the world in opposite directions I started for Suez on the day she sailed for New York.

MRS LUNN [*suddenly becoming attentive*] Thats precisely what Gregory and I did Now I wonder did he want a holiday from me! What he said was that he wanted the delight of meeting me after a long absence.

JUNO Could anything be more romantic than that? Would anyone else than an Englishman have thought of it? I daresay my temperament seems tame to your boiling southern blood—

MRS LUNN My what!

JUNO Your southern blood Dont you remember how you told me, that night in the saloon when I sang "Farewell and adieu to you dear Spanish ladies," that you were by birth a lady of Spain? Your splendid Andalusian beauty speaks for itself

My father was Captain Jenkins In the artillery

JUNO [*ardently*] It is climate and not race that determines the temperament. The fiery sun of Spain blazed on your cradle, and it rocked to the roar of British cannon

MRS LUNN What eloquence! It reminds me of my husband when he was in love—before we were married. Are you in love?

JUNO Yes, and with the same woman

MRS LUNN Well, of course, I didnt suppose you were in love with two women

JUNO I dont think you quite understand I meant that I am in love with you

MRS LUNN [*relapsing into deepest boredom*] Oh, that! Men do fall in love with me. They all seem to think me a creature with volcanic passions. I'm sure I dont know why, for all the volcanic women I know are plain little creatures with sandy hair. I dont consider human volcanoes respectable. And I'm so tired of the subject! Our house is always full of women who are in love with my husband and men who are in love with me. We encourage it because it's pleasant to have company.

JUNO And is your husband as insensible as yourself?

MRS LUNN Oh, Gregory's not insensible—very far from it, but I am the only woman in the world for him.

JUNO But you? Are you really as insensible as you say you are?

MRS LUNN I never said anything of the kind. I'm not at all insensible by nature, but (I dont know whether youve noticed it) I am what people call rather a fine figure of a woman.

JUNO [*passionately*] Noticed it! Oh, Mrs Lunn! Have I been able to notice anything else since we met?

MRS LUNN There you go, like all the rest of them! I ask you, how do you expect a woman to keep up what you call her sensibility when this sort of thing has happened to her about three times a week ever since she was seventeen? It used to upset me and terrify me at first. Then I got rather a taste for it. It came to a climax with Gregory that was why I married him. Then it became a mild lark, hardly worth the trouble. After that I found it valuable once or twice as a spinal tonic when I was run down, but now it's an unmitigated bore. I dont mind your declaration. I daresay it gives you a certain

pleasure to make it. I quite understand that you adore me, but (if you dont mind) I'd rather you didnt keep on saying so.

JUNO Is there then no hope for me?

MRS LUNN Oh, yes. Gregory has an idea that married women keep lists of the men theyll marry if they become widows. I'll put your name down, if that will satisfy you.

JUNO Is the list a long one?

MRS LUNN Do you mean the real list? Not the one I shew to Gregory—there are hundreds of names on that, but the little private list that he'd better not see?

JUNO Oh, will you really put me on that? Say you will.

MRS LUNN Well, perhaps I will. [*He kisses her hand*] Now dont begin abusing the privilege.

JUNO May I call you by your Christian name?

MRS LUNN No, it's too long. You cant go about calling a woman Seraphita.

JUNO [*ecstatically*] Seraphita!

MRS LUNN I used to be called Sally at home, but when I married a man named Lunn, of course that became ridiculous. Thats my one little pet joke. Call me Mrs Lunn for short. And change the subject, or I shall go to sleep.

JUNO I cant change the subject. For me there is no other subject. Why else have you put me on your list?

MRS LUNN Because youre a solicitor. Gregory's a solicitor. I'm accustomed to my husband being a solicitor and telling me things he oughtnt to tell anybody.

JUNO [*ruefully*] Is that all? Oh, I cant believe that the voice of love has ever thoroughly awakened you.

MRS LUNN No, it sends me to sleep. [*Juno appeals against this by an amorous demonstration*] It's no use, Mr Juno. I'm hopelessly respectable. The Jenkinses always were. Dont you realize that unless most women were like that, the world couldnt go on as it does?

JUNO [*darkly*] You think it goes on respectably, but I can tell you as a solicitor—

MRS LUNN Stuff! Of course all the disreputable people who get into trouble go to you, just as all the sick people go to the doctors, but most people never go to a solicitor.

JUNO [*rising, with a growing sense of injury*] Look here, Mrs Lunn, do you think a man's heart is a potato? or a turnip? or a ball of knitting wool? that you can throw it away

like this?

MRS LUNN. I dont throw away balls of knitting wool A man's heart seems to me much like a sponge it sops up dirty water as well as clean

JUNO I have never been treated like this in my life Here am I, a married man, with a most attractive wife a wife I adore, and who adores me, and has never as much as looked at any other man since we were married I come and throw all this at your feet. If I, a solicitor! braving the risk of your husband putting me into the divorce court and making me a beggar and an outcast! I do this for your sake And you go on as if I were making no sacrifice as if I had told you it's a fine evening, or asked you to have a cup of tea It's not human It's not right Love has its rights as well as respectability [*he sits down again, aloof and sulky*]

MRS LUNN Nonsense! Here! heres a flower [*she gives him one*] Go and dream over it until you feel hungry. Nothing brings people to their senses like hunger

JUNO [*contemplating the flower without rapture*] What good's this?

MRS LUNN [*snatching it from him*] Oh! you dont love me a bit

JUNO Yes I do Or at least I did. But I'm an Englishman, and I think you ought to respect the conventions of English life

MRS LUNN But I am respecting them, and youre not

JUNO Pardon me I may be doing wrong, but I'm doing it in a proper and customary manner You may be doing right; but youre doing it in an unusual and questionable manner. I am not prepared to put up with that I can stand being badly treated I'm no baby, and can take care of myself with anybody And of course I can stand being well treated But the one thing I cant stand is being unexpectedly treated. It's outside my scheme of life So come now! youve got to behave naturally and straightforwardly with me. You can leave husband and child, home, friends, and country, for my sake, and come with me to some southern isle—or say South America—where we can be all in all to one another Or you can tell your husband and let him jolly well punch my head if he can But I'm damned if I'm going to stand any eccentricity It's not respectable

GREGORY [*coming in from the terrace and advancing with dignity to his wife's end of the*

chesterfield] Will you have the goodness, sir, in addressing this lady, to keep your temper and refrain from using profane language?

MRS LUNN [*rising, delighted*] Gregory! Darling [*she enfolds him in a copious embrace*]

JUNO [*rising*] You make love to another man to my face!

MRS LUNN. Why, he's my husband

JUNO That takes away the last rag of excuse for such conduct A nice world it would be if married people were to carry on their endearments before everybody!

GREGORY This is ridiculous What the devil business is it of yours what passes between my wife and myself? Youre not her husband, are you?

JUNO. Not at present; but I'm on the list I'm her prospective husband. youre only her actual one. I'm the anticipation youre the disappointment.

MRS LUNN. Oh, my Gregory is not a disappointment [*Fondly*] Are you, dear?

GREGORY You just wait, my pet I'll settle this chap for you [*He disengages himself from her embrace, and faces Juno She sits down placidly*] You call me a disappointment, do you? Well, I suppose every husband's a disappointment What about yourself? Dont try to look like an unmarried man I happen to know the lady you disappointed I travelled in the same ship with her, and—

JUNO And you fell in love with her.

GREGORY [*taken aback*] Who told you that?

JUNO. Aha! you confess it Well, if you want to know, nobody told me. Everybody falls in love with my wife

GREGORY. And do you fall in love with everybody's wife?

JUNO Certainly not Only with yours

MRS LUNN But whats the good of saying that, Mr Juno? I'm married to him, and theres an end of it

JUNO. Not at all You can get a divorce

MRS LUNN What for?

JUNO For his misconduct with my wife

GREGORY [*deeply indignant*] How dare you, sir, asperse the character of that sweet lady? a lady whom I have taken under my protection

JUNO Protection!

MRS JUNO [*returning hastily*] Really you must be more careful what you say about me, Mr Lunn

JUNO My precious! [*He embraces her*] Pardon this betrayal of feeling, but Ive not seen

my wife for several weeks, and she is very dear to me

GREGORY I call this cheek Who is making love to his own wife before people now, pray?

MRS LUNN Wont you introduce me to your wife, Mr Juno?

MRS JUNO How do you do? [*They shake hands, and Mrs Juno sits down beside Mrs Lunn, on her left*]

MRS LUNN I'm so glad to find you do credit to Gregory's taste I'm naturally rather particular about the women he falls in love with

JUNO [*sternly*] This is no way to take your husband's unfaithfulness [*To Lunn*] You ought to teach your wife better Wheres her feelings? It's scandalous

GREGORY. What about your own conduct, pray?

JUNO I dont defend it, and theres an end of the matter

GREGORY Well, upon my soul! What difference does your not defending it make?

JUNO A fundamental difference To serious people I may appear wicked I dont defend myself I am wicked, though not bad at heart To thoughtless people I may even appear comic Well, laugh at me I have given myself away But Mrs Lunn seems to have no opinion at all about me She doesnt seem to know whether I'm wicked or comic. She doesnt seem to care She has no moral sense I say it's not right I repeat, I have sinned, and I'm prepared to suffer

MRS JUNO Have you really sinned, Tops?

MRS LUNN [*blandly*] I dont remember your sinning I have a shocking bad memory for trifles, but I think I should remember that—if you mean me

JUNO [*raging*] Trifles! I have fallen in love with a monster

GREGORY Dont you dare call my wife a monster

MRS JUNO [*rising quickly and coming between them*] Please dont lose your temper, Mr Lunn I wont have my Tops bullied

GREGORY Well, then, let him not brag about sinning with my wife [*He turns impulsively to his wife, makes her rise, and takes her proudly on his arm*] What pretension has he to any such honor?

JUNO I sinned in intention [*Mrs Juno abandons him and resumes her seat, chilled*] I'm as guilty as if I had actually sinned And I insist on being treated as a sinner, and not walked over as if I'd done nothing, by your

wife or any other man

MRS LUNN Tush! [*She sits down again contemptuously*]

JUNO [*furious*] I wont be belittled

MRS LUNN [*to Mrs Juno*] I hope youll come and stay with us now that you and Gregory are such friends, Mrs Juno

JUNO This insane magnanimity—

MRS LUNN Dont you think youve said enough, Mr Juno? This is a matter for two women to settle Wont you take a stroll on the beach with my Gregory while we talk it over Gregory is a splendid listener

JUNO I dont think any good can come of a conversation between Mr Lunn and myself We can hardly be expected to improve one another's morals [*He passes behind the chesterfield to Mrs Lunn's end, seizes a chair, deliberately pushes it between Gregory and Mrs Lunn, and sits down with folded arms, resolved not to budge*]

GREGORY Oh! Indeed! Oh, all right If you come to that—[*he crosses to Mrs Juno, plants a chair by her side, and sits down with equal determination*]

JUNO Now we are both equally guilty

GREGORY Pardon me I'm not guilty

JUNO In intention Dont quibble You were guilty in intention, as I was

GREGORY No I should rather describe myself as being guilty in fact, but not in intention

JUNO	} <i>rising and</i>	{ What!		
MRS JUNO			} <i>exclaiming</i>	{ No, really—
MRS LUNN				

GREGORY Yes I maintain that I am responsible for my intentions only, and not for reflex actions over which I have no control [*Mrs Juno sits down, ashamed*] I promised my mother that I would never tell a lie, and that I would never make love to a married woman I never have told a lie—

MRS LUNN [*remonstrating*] Gregory! [*She sits down again*]

GREGORY I say never On many occasions I have resorted to prevarication, but on great occasions I have always told the truth I regard this as a great occasion, and I wont be intimidated into breaking my promise I solemnly declare that I did not know until this evening that Mrs Juno was married She will bear me out when I say that from that moment my intentions were strictly and resolutely honorable, though my conduct, which I could not control and am therefore

not responsible for, was disgraceful—or would have been had this gentleman not walked in and begun making love to my wife under my very nose

JUNO [*flinging himself back into his chair*] Well, I like this!

MRS LUNN Really, darling, theres no use in the pot calling the kettle black.

GREGORY. When you say darling, may I ask which of us you are addressing?

MRS LUNN I really dont know I'm getting hopelessly confused

JUNO Why dont you let my wife say something? I dont think she ought to be thrust into the background like this.

MRS LUNN. I'm sorry, I'm sure Please excuse me, dear.

MRS JUNO [*thoughtfully*] I dont know what to say. I must think over it I have always been rather severe on this sort of thing, but when it came to the point I didnt behave as I thought I should behave. I didnt intend to be wicked, but somehow or other, Nature, or whatever you choose to call it, didnt take much notice of my intentions. [*Gregory instinctively seeks her hand and presses it*] And I really did think, Tops, that I was the only woman in the world for you

JUNO [*cheerfully*] Oh, thats all right, my precious Mrs Lunn thought she was the only woman in the world for him

GREGORY [*reflectively*] So she is, in a sort of way

JUNO [*flaring up*] And so is my wife Dont you set up to be a better husband than I am; for youre not Ive owned I'm wrong You havnt.

MRS LUNN. Are you sorry, Gregory?

GREGORY [*perplexed*] Sorry?

MRS LUNN Yes, sorry. I think it's time for you to say youre sorry, and to make friends with Mr Juno before we all dine together

GREGORY. Seraphuta: I promised my mother—

MRS JUNO [*involuntarily*] Oh, bother your mother! [*Recovering herself*] I beg your pardon

GREGORY. A promise is a promise. I cant tell a deliberate lie. I know I ought to be sorry; but the flat fact is that I'm not sorry I find that in this business, somehow or other, there is a disastrous separation between my moral principles and my conduct.

JUNO Theres nothing disastrous about it It doesnt matter about your conduct if your

principles are all right

GREGORY Bosh! It doesnt matter about your principles if your conduct is all right.

JUNO But your conduct isnt all right, and my principles are

GREGORY. Whats the good of your principles being right if they wont work?

JUNO. They will work, sir, if you exercise self-sacrifice.

GREGORY. Oh yes: if, if, if. You know jolly well that self-sacrifice doesnt work either when you really want a thing. How much have you sacrificed yourself, pray?

MRS LUNN Oh, a great deal, Gregory Dont be rude Mr Juno is a very nice man he has been most attentive to me on the voyage

GREGORY. And Mrs Juno's a very nice woman She oughtnt to be, but she is.

JUNO Why oughtnt she to be a nice woman, pray?

GREGORY I mean she oughtnt to be nice to me And you oughtnt to be nice to my wife And your wife oughtnt to like me And my wife oughtnt to like you. And if they do, they oughtnt to go on liking us And I oughtnt to like your wife, and you oughtnt to like mine, and if we do, we oughtnt to go on liking them But we do, all of us We oughtnt; but we do.

JUNO But, my dear boy, if we admit we are in the wrong wheres the harm of it? We're not perfect; but as long as we keep the ideal before us—

GREGORY How?

JUNO By admitting we're wrong.

MRS LUNN [*springing up, out of patience, and pacing round the lounge intolerantly*] Well, really, I must have my dinner These two men, with their morality, and their promises to their mothers, and their admissions that they were wrong, and their sinning and suffering, and their going on at one another as if it meant anything, or as if it mattered, are getting on my nerves [*Stooping over the back of the chesterfield to address Mrs Juno*] If you will be so very good, my dear, as to take my sentimental husband off my hands occasionally, I shall be more than obliged to you: I'm sure you can stand more male sentimentality than I can [*Sweeping away to the fireplace*] I, on my part, will do my best to amuse your excellent husband when you find him tiresome

JUNO I call this polyandry

MRS LUNN. I wish you wouldnt call innocent

things by offensive names, Mr Juno. What do you call your own conduct?

JUNO *[rising]* I tell you I have admitted—

GREGORY

MRS JUNO

MRS LUNN

together

Whats the good of keeping on at that?

Oh, not that again, please.

Tops I'll scream if you say that again

JUNO Oh, well, if you wont listen to me—!

[He sits down again]

MRS JUNO What is the position now exactly?

[Mrs Lunn shrugs her shoulders and gives up the conundrum Gregory looks at Juno Juno turns away his head huffily] I mean, what are we going to do?

MRS LUNN What would you advise, Mr Juno?

JUNO I should advise you to divorce your husband

MRS LUNN You want me to drag your wife into court and disgrace her?

JUNO No I forgot that. Excuse me, but for the moment I thought I was married to you

GREGORY I think we had better let bygones be bygones *[To Mrs Juno, very tenderly]* You will forgive me, wont you? Why should you let a moment's forgetfulness embitter all our future life?

MRS JUNO But it's Mrs Lunn who has to forgive you

GREGORY Oh, dash it, I forgot This is getting ridiculous

MRS LUNN I'm getting hungry

MRS JUNO Do you really mind, Mrs Lunn?

MRS LUNN My dear Mrs Juno, Gregory is one of those terribly uxorious men who ought to have ten wives If any really nice woman will take him off my hands for a day or two occasionally, I shall be greatly obliged to her

GREGORY Seraphita you cut me to the soul *[he weeps]*

MRS LUNN Serve you right! Youd think it quite proper if it cut me to the soul

MRS JUNO Am I to take Sibthorpe off your hands too, Mrs Lunn?

JUNO *[rising]* Do you suppose I'll allow this?

MRS JUNO Youve admitted that youve done wrong, Tops Whats the use of your allowing or not allowing after that?

JUNO I do not admit that I have done wrong I admit that what I did was wrong

GREGORY Can you explain the distinction?

JUNO It's quite plain to anyone but an

imbecile If you tell me Ive done something wrong you insult me But if you say that something that I did is wrong you simply raise a question of morals I tell you flatly if you say I did anything wrong you will have to fight me In fact I think we ought to fight anyhow I dont particularly want to, but I feel that England expects us to

GREGORY I wont fight If you beat me my wife would share my humiliation If I beat you, she would sympathize with you and loathe me for my brutality

MRS LUNN Not to mention that as we are human beings and not reindeer or barndoor fowl, if two men presumed to fight for us we couldnt decently ever speak to either of them again

GREGORY. Besides, neither of us could beat the other, as we neither of us know how to fight We should only blacken each other's eyes and make fools of ourselves

JUNO I dont admit that Every Englishman can use his fists

GREGORY Youre an Englishman Can you use yours?

JUNO I presume so I never tried

MRS JUNO You never told me you couldnt fight, Tops I thought you were an accomplished boxer

JUNO My precious I never gave you any ground for such a belief.

MRS JUNO You always talked as if it were a matter of course You spoke with the greatest contempt of men who didnt kick other men downstairs

JUNO Well, I cant kick Mr Lunn downstairs We're on the ground floor

MRS JUNO You could throw him into the harbor

GREGORY Do you want me to be thrown into the harbor?

MRS JUNO No I only want to shew Tops that he's making a ghastly fool of himself

GREGORY *[rising and prowling disgustedly between the chesterfield and the windows]* We're all making fools of ourselves

JUNO *[following him]* Well, if we're not to fight, I must insist at least on your never speaking to my wife again

GREGORY Does my speaking to your wife do you any harm?

JUNO No But it's the proper course to take *[Emphatically]* We must behave with some sort of decency

MRS LUNN And are you never going to

speak to me again, Mr Juno?

JUNO. I'm prepared to promise never to do so I think your husband has a right to demand that. Then if I speak to you after, it will not be his fault. It will be a breach of my promise, and I shall not attempt to defend my conduct.

GREGORY [*facing him*] I shall talk to your wife as often as she'll let me.

MRS JUNO. I have no objection to your speaking to me, Mr Lunn.

JUNO. Then I shall take steps.

GREGORY. What steps?

JUNO. Steps Measures Proceedings. Such steps as may seem advisable.

MRS LUNN [*to Mrs Juno*] Can your husband afford a scandal, Mrs Juno?

MRS JUNO. No.

MRS LUNN. Neither can mine.

GREGORY. Mrs Juno. I'm very sorry I let you in for all this. I don't know how it is that we contrive to make feelings like ours, which seem to me to be beautiful and sacred feelings, and which lead to such interesting and exciting adventures, end in vulgar squabbles and degrading scenes.

JUNO. I decline to admit that my conduct has been vulgar or degrading.

GREGORY. I promised—

JUNO. Look here, old chap. I don't say a word against your mother, and I'm sorry she's dead, but really, you know, most women are mothers, and they all die some time or other, yet that doesn't make them infallible authorities on morals, does it?

GREGORY. I was about to say so myself. Let me add that if you do things merely because you think some other fool expects you to do them, and he expects you to do them because he thinks you expect him to expect you to do them, it will end in everybody doing what nobody wants to do, which is in my opinion a silly state of things.

JUNO. Lunn. I love your wife, and that's all about it.

GREGORY. Juno. I love yours. What then?

JUNO. Clearly she must never see you again.

MRS JUNO. Why not?

JUNO. Why not! My love. I'm surprised at you.

MRS JUNO. Am I to speak only to men who dislike me?

JUNO. Yes. I think that is, properly speaking, a married woman's duty.

MRS JUNO. Then I won't do it. That's flat. I like to be liked. I like to be loved. I want everyone round me to love me. I don't want to meet or speak to anyone who doesn't like me.

JUNO. But, my precious, this is the most horrible immorality.

MRS LUNN. I don't intend to give up meeting you, Mr Juno. You amuse me very much. I don't like being loved. It bores me. But I do like to be amused.

JUNO. I hope we shall meet very often. But I hope also we shall not defend our conduct.

MRS JUNO [*rising*]. This is unendurable. We've all been flirting. Need we go on footling about it?

JUNO [*huffily*]. I don't know what you call footling—

MRS JUNO [*cutting him short*]. You do. You're footling. Mr Lunn is footling. Can't we admit that we're human and have done with it?

JUNO. I have admitted it all along. I—

MRS JUNO [*almost screaming*]. Then stop footling.

The dinner gong sounds.

MRS LUNN [*rising*]. Thank heaven! Let's go into dinner. Gregory. Take in Mrs Juno.

GREGORY. But surely I ought to take in our guest, and not my own wife.

MRS LUNN. Well, Mrs Juno is not your wife, is she?

GREGORY. Oh, of course. I beg your pardon. I'm hopelessly confused. [*He offers his arm to Mrs Juno, rather apprehensively*].

MRS JUNO. You seem quite afraid of me [*she takes his arm*].

GREGORY. I am. I simply adore you [*They go out together, and as they pass through the door he turns and says in a ringing voice to the other couple*]. I have said to Mrs Juno that I simply adore her [*He takes her out defiantly*].

MRS LUNN [*calling after him*]. Yes, dear. She's a darling. [*To Juno*]. Now, Sibthorpe.

JUNO [*giving her his arm gallantly*]. You have called me Sibthorpe! Thank you. I think Lunn's conduct fully justifies me in allowing you to do it.

MRS LUNN. Yes. I think you may let yourself go now.

JUNO. Seraphita. I worship you beyond expression.

MRS LUNN. Sibthorpe. You amuse me beyond description. Come [*They go in to dinner together*].

THE END

XXIII

PYGMALION

A ROMANCE IN FIVE ACTS (1912)

ACT I

Covent Garden at 11 15 p.m. Torrents of heavy summer rain. Cab whistles blowing frantically in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter into the market and under the portico of St Paul's Church, where there are already several people, among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. They are all peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, who seems wholly pre-occupied with a notebook in which he is writing busily.

The church clock strikes the first quarter.

THE DAUGHTER [*in the space between the central pillars, close to the one on her left*] I'm getting chilled to the bone. What can Freddy be doing all this time? He's been gone twenty minutes.

THE MOTHER [*on her daughter's right*] Not so long. But he ought to have got us a cab by this.

A BYSTANDER [*on the lady's right*] He won't get no cab not until half-past eleven, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

THE MOTHER. But we must have a cab. We can't stand here until half-past eleven. It's too bad.

THE BYSTANDER. Well, it ain't my fault, missus.

THE DAUGHTER. If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.

THE MOTHER. What could he have done, poor boy?

THE DAUGHTER. Other people got cabs. Why couldn't he?

Freddy rushes in out of the rain from the Southampton Street side, and comes between them closing a dripping umbrella. He is a young man of twenty, in evening dress, very wet round the ankles.

THE DAUGHTER. Well, haven't you got a cab?

FREDDY. There's not one to be had for love or money.

THE MOTHER. Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can't have tried.

THE DAUGHTER. It's too tiresome. Do you

expect us to go and get one ourselves?

FREDDY. I tell you they're all engaged. The rain was so sudden, nobody was prepared; and everybody had to take a cab. I've been to Charing Cross one way and nearly to Ludgate Circus the other; and they were all engaged.

THE MOTHER. Did you try Trafalgar Square?

FREDDY. There wasn't one at Trafalgar Square.

THE DAUGHTER. Did you try?

FREDDY. I tried as far as Charing Cross Station. Did you expect me to walk to Hammersmith?

THE DAUGHTER. You haven't tried at all.

THE MOTHER. You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again, and don't come back until you have found a cab.

FREDDY. I shall simply get soaked for nothing.

THE DAUGHTER. And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this draught, with next to nothing on? You selfish pig—

FREDDY. Oh, very well. I'll go, I'll go. [*He opens his umbrella and dashes off Strandwards, but comes into collision with a flower girl, who is hurrying in for shelter, knocking her basket out of her hands. A blinding flash of lightning, followed instantly by a rattling peal of thunder, orchestrates the incident.*]

THE FLOWER GIRL. Nah then, Freddy. Look wh'y' gowin, deah.

FREDDY. Sorry. [*he rushes off*].

THE FLOWER GIRL [*picking up her scattered flowers and replacing them in the basket*]. There's men's f' yer! Te-oo bunches o' voylets trod into the mud. [*She sits down on the plinth of the column, sorting her flowers, on the lady's right. She is not at all an attractive person. She is perhaps eighteen, perhaps twenty, hardly older. She wears a little sailor hat of black straw that has long been exposed to the dust and soot of London and has seldom if ever been brushed. Her hair needs washing rather badly; its mousey color can hardly be natural. She wears a shoddy black coat that reaches nearly to her knees and is shaped to her waist. She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron. Her boots are much the worse for*]

near She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be, but compared to the ladies she is very dirty Her features are no worse than theirs; but their condition leaves something to be desired, and she needs the services of a dentist]

THE MOTHER How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray?

THE FLOWER GIRL. Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin Will ye-oo py me f' them? [*Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.*]

THE DAUGHTER Do nothing of the sort, mother. The idea!

THE MOTHER. Please allow me, Clara Have you any pennies?

THE DAUGHTER No I've nothing smaller than sixpence

THE FLOWER GIRL [*hopefully*] I can give you change for a tanner, kind lady

THE MOTHER [*to Clara*] Give it to me [*Clara parts reluctantly*] Now [*to the girl*] This is for your flowers

THE FLOWER GIRL Thank you kindly, lady

THE DAUGHTER Make her give you the change These things are only a penny a bunch

THE MOTHER Do hold your tongue, Clara. [*To the girl*] You can keep the change

THE FLOWER GIRL Oh, thank you, lady

THE MOTHER Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

THE FLOWER GIRL I didn't.

THE MOTHER. I heard you call him by it Don't try to deceive me

THE FLOWER GIRL [*protesting*] Who's trying to deceive you? I called him Freddy or Charlie same as you might yourself if you was talking to a stranger and wished to be pleasant [*She sits down beside her basket*]

THE DAUGHTER Sixpence thrown away! Really, mamma, you might have spared Freddy that [*She retreats in disgust behind the pillar*]

An elderly gentleman of the amiable military type rushes into the shelter, and closes a dripping umbrella. He is in the same plight as Freddy, very wet about the ankles He is in evening dress, with a light overcoat He takes the place left vacant by the daughter's retirement.

THE GENTLEMAN Phew!

THE MOTHER [*to the gentleman*] Oh, sir, is

there any sign of its stopping?

THE GENTLEMAN. I'm afraid not It started worse than ever about two minutes ago [*he goes to the plinth beside the flower girl, puts up his foot on it, and stoops to turn down his trouser ends*]

THE MOTHER. Oh dear! [*She retires sadly and joins her daughter*]

THE FLOWER GIRL [*taking advantage of the military gentleman's proximity to establish friendly relations with him*] If it's worse, it's a sign it's nearly over So cheer up, Captain; and buy a flower off a poor girl

THE GENTLEMAN I'm sorry. I haven't any change.

THE FLOWER GIRL I can give you change, Captain

THE GENTLEMAN For a sovereign? I've nothing less

THE FLOWER GIRL Garn! Oh do buy a flower off me, Captain I can change half-a-crown. Take this for tuppence

THE GENTLEMAN. Now don't be troublesome—theres a good girl [*Trying his pockets*] I really haven't any change—Stop. heres three ha-pence, if thats any use to you [*he retreats to the other pillar*].

THE FLOWER GIRL [*disappointed, but thinking three halfpence better than nothing*] Thank you, sir

THE BYSTANDER [*to the girl*] You be careful. give him a flower for it. Theres a bloke here behind taking down every blessed word you're saying [*All turn to the man who is taking notes*]

THE FLOWER GIRL [*springing up terrified*] I aint done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman. I've a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb [*Hysterically*] I'm a respectable girl. so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me [*General hubbub, mostly sympathetic to the flower girl, but deprecating her excessive sensibility Cries of* Don't start hollerin Who's hurting you? Nobody's going to touch you. Whats the good of fussing? Steady on Easy easy, etc , *come from the elderly staid spectators, who pat her comfortingly Less patient ones bid her shut her head, or ask her roughly what is wrong with her. A remoter group, not knowing what the matter is, crowd in and increase the noise with question and answer. Whats the row? Whatshe do? Where is he? A tec taking her down What! him? Yes him over there. Took money off the gentleman, etc The flower girl, distraught and mobbed, breaks through them to*

THE NOTE TAKER Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge, and India

THE GENTLEMAN Quite right. [*Great laughter*] Reaction in the note taker's favor Exclamations of He knows all about it. Told him proper. Hear him tell the toff where he come from? etc] May I ask, sir, do you do this for your living at a music hall?

THE NOTE TAKER I've thought of that Perhaps I shall some day.

The rain has stopped, and the persons on the outside of the crowd begin to drop off

THE FLOWER GIRL [*resenting the reaction*] He's no gentleman, he aint, to interfere with a poor girl.

THE DAUGHTER [*out of patience, pushing her way rudely to the front and displacing the gentleman, who politely retires to the other side of the pillar*] What on earth is Freddy doing? I shall get pneumonia if I stay in this draught any longer

THE NOTE TAKER [*to himself, hastily making a note of her pronunciation of "moma"*] Earls-court.

THE DAUGHTER [*violently*] Will you please keep your impertinent remarks to yourself.

THE NOTE TAKER Did I say that out loud? I didnt mean to I beg your pardon Your mother's Epsom, unmistakeably.

THE MOTHER [*advancing between her daughter and the note taker*] How very curious! I was brought up in Largelady Park, near Epsom

THE NOTE TAKER [*uproariously amused*] Hal hal! What a devil of a name! Excuse me. [*To the daughter*] You want a cab, do you?

THE DAUGHTER Dont dare speak to me.

THE MOTHER Oh please, please, Clara [*Her daughter repudiates her with an angry shrug and retires haughtily*] We should be so grateful to you, sir, if you found us a cab [*The note taker produces a whistle*]. Oh, thank you. [*She joins her daughter*]

The note taker blows a piercing blast

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER There! I knowed he was a plain-clothes copper.

THE BYSTANDER That aint a police whistle—thats a sporting whistle

THE FLOWER GIRL [*still preoccupied with her wounded feelings*] He's no right to take away my character. My character is the same to me as any lady's

THE NOTE TAKER I dont know whether youve noticed it, but the rain stopped about two minutes ago

THE BYSTANDER So it has Why didnt you

say so before? and us losing our time ing to your silliness! [*He walks off towards Strand*]

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER I can tell wi you come from. You come from Anwell back there.

THE NOTE TAKER [*helpfully*] Hanwell

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER [*affecting great distinction of speech*] Thank you, teacher Haw haw! So long [*he touches his hat with mock respect and strolls off*]

THE FLOWER GIRL. Frightening people like that! How would he like it himself?

THE MOTHER It's quite fine now, Clara We can walk to a motor bus Come [*She gathers her skirts above her ankles and hurries off towards the Strand*]

THE DAUGHTER. But the cab—[*her mother is out of hearing*] Oh, how tiresome! [*She follows angrily*]

All the rest have gone except the note taker, the gentleman, and the flower girl, who sits arranging her basket, and still pitying herself in murmurs

THE FLOWER GIRL Poor girl! Hard enough for her to live without being worried and chivied

THE GENTLEMAN [*returning to his former place on the note taker's left*] How do you do it, if I may ask?

THE NOTE TAKER Simply phonetics The science of speech Thats my profession also my hobby Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby! You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his brogue I can place any man within six miles I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets

THE FLOWER GIRL. Ought to be ashamed of himself, unmanly coward!

THE GENTLEMAN. But is there a living in that?

THE NOTE TAKER Oh yes Quite a fat one. This is an age of upstarts. Men begin in Kentish Town with £80 a year, and end in Park Lane with a hundred thousand. They want to drop Kentish Town; but they give themselves away every time they open their mouths Now I can teach them—

THE FLOWER GIRL Let him mind his own business and leave a poor girl—

THE NOTE TAKER [*explosively*] Woman, cease this detestable boo-hooing instantly, or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship

THE FLOWER GIRL [*with feeble defiance*] I've a right to be here if I like, same as you.

THE NOTE TAKER A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech that your native language is the language of Shakespear and Milton and The Bible, and dont sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon

THE FLOWER GIRL [*quite overwhelmed, looking up at him in mingled wonder and deprecation without daring to raise her head*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!

THE NOTE TAKER [*whipping out his book*] Heavens! what a sound! [*He writes, then holds out the book and reads, reproducing her vowels exactly*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo!

THE FLOWER GIRL [*ticked by the performance, and laughing in spite of herself*] Garn!

THE NOTE TAKER. You see this creature with her kerbstone English the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English. That's the sort of thing I do for commercial millionaires. And on the profits of it I do genuine scientific work in phonetics, and a little as a poet on Miltonic lines

THE GENTLEMAN I am myself a student of Indian dialects, and—

THE NOTE TAKER [*eagerly*] Are you? Do you know Colonel Pickering, the author of Spoken Sanscrit?

THE GENTLEMAN I am Colonel Pickering. Who are you?

THE NOTE TAKER. Henry Higgins, author of Higgins's Universal Alphabet.

PICKERING [*with enthusiasm*] I came from India to meet you

HIGGINS I was going to India to meet you

PICKERING Where do you live?

HIGGINS 27A Wimpole Street. Come and see me tomorrow

PICKERING. I'm at the Carlton. Come with me now and lets have a jaw over some supper

HIGGINS Right you are

THE FLOWER GIRL [*to Pickering, as he passes her*] Buy a flower, kind gentleman. I'm short for my lodging

PICKERING I really havnt any change. I'm

sorry [*he goes away*]

HIGGINS [*shocked at the girl's mendacity*] Liar. You said you could change half-a-crown.

THE FLOWER GIRL [*rising in desperation*] You ought to be stuffed with nails, you ought. [*Flinging the basket at his feet*] Take the whole blooming basket for sixpence

The church clock strikes the second quarter
HIGGINS [*hearing in it the voice of God, rebuking him for his Pharisaic want of charity to the poor girl*] A reminder. [*He raises his hat solemnly, then throws a handful of money into the basket and follows Pickering*]

THE FLOWER GIRL [*picking up a half-crown*] Ah-ow-oo! [*Picking up a couple of florins*] Aaah-ow-oo! [*Picking up several coins*] Aaaaaah-ow-oo! [*Picking up a half-sovereign*] Aaaaaaaaaaah-ow-oo!"

FREDDY [*springing out of a taxicab*] Got one at last. Hallo! [*To the girl*] Where are the two ladies that were here?

THE FLOWER GIRL They walked to the bus when the rain stopped

FREDDY And left me with a cab on my hands! Damnation!

THE FLOWER GIRL [*with grandeur*] Never mind, young man. I'm going home in a taxi. [*She sails off to the cab. The driver puts his hand behind him and holds the door firmly shut against her. Quite understanding his mistrust, she shews him her handful of money*] Eightpence aint no object to me, Charlie. [*He grins and opens the door*] Angel Court, Drury Lane, round the corner of Micklejohn's oil shop. Lets see how fast you can make her hop it. [*She gets in and pulls the door to with a slam as the taxicab starts*]

FREDDY Well, I'm dashed!

ACT II

Next day at 11 a.m. Higgins's laboratory in Wimpole Street. It is a room on the first floor, looking on the street, and was meant for the drawing room. The double doors are in the middle of the back wall, and persons entering find in the corner to their right two tall file cabinets at right angles to one another against the walls. In this corner stands a flat writing-table, on which are a phonograph, a laryngoscope, a row of tiny organ pipes with a bellows, a set of lamp chimneys for singing flames with burners attached to a gas plug in the wall by an india-rubber tube, several tuning-forks of different sizes, a life-size image of half a human head,

shering in section the vocal organs, and a box containing a supply of wax cylinders for the phonograph

Further down the room, on the same side, is a fireplace, with a comfortable leather-covered easy-chair at the side of the hearth nearest the door, and a coal-scuttle. There is a clock on the mantelpiece. Between the fireplace and the phonograph table is a stand for newspapers.

On the other side of the central door, to the left of the visitor, is a cabinet of shallow drawers. On it is a telephone and the telephone directory. The corner beyond, and most of the side wall, is occupied by a grand piano, with the keyboard at the end furthest from the door, and a bench for the player extending the full length of the keyboard. On the piano is a dessert dish heaped with fruit and sweets, mostly chocolates.

The middle of the room is clear. Besides the easy-chair, the piano bench, and two chairs at the phonograph table, there is one stray chair. It stands near the fireplace. On the walls, engravings mostly Piranesi and mezzotint portraits. No paintings.

Pickering is seated at the table, putting down some cards and a tuning-fork which he has been using. Higgins is standing up near him, closing two or three file drawers which are hanging out. He appears in the morning light as a robust, vital, appetizing sort of man of forty or thereabouts, dressed in a professional-looking black frock-coat with a white linen collar and black silk tie. He is of the energetic, scientific type, heartily, even violently, interested in everything that can be studied as a scientific subject, and careless about himself and other people, including their feelings. He is, in fact, but for his years and size, rather like a very impetuous baby "taking notice" eagerly and loudly, and requiring almost as much watching to keep him out of unintended mischief. His manner varies from genial bullying when he is in a good humor to stormy petulance when anything goes wrong; but he is so entirely frank and void of malice that he remains likeable even in his least reasonable moments.

HIGGINS [as he shuts the last drawer] Well, I think that's the whole show.

PICKERING It's really amazing. I haven't taken half of it in, you know.

HIGGINS. Would you like to go over any of it again?

PICKERING [rising and coming over to the fireplace, where he plants himself with his back to the fire] No, thank you; not now. I'm quite done up for this morning.

HIGGINS [following him, and standing beside him on his left] Tired of listening to sounds?

PICKERING Yes. It's a fearful strain. I rather fancied myself because I can pronounce twenty-four distinct vowel sounds, but your hundred and thirty beat me. I can't hear a bit of difference between most of them.

HIGGINS [chuckling, and going over to the piano to eat sweets] Oh, that comes with practice. You hear no difference at first, but you keep on listening, and presently you find they're all as different as A from B. [Mrs Pearce looks in. She is Higgins's housekeeper.] What's the matter?

MRS PEARCE [hesitating, evidently perplexed] A young woman wants to see you, sir.

HIGGINS A young woman! What does she want?

MRS PEARCE. Well, sir, she says you'll be glad to see her when you know what she's come about. She's quite a common girl, sir. Very common indeed. I should have sent her away, only I thought perhaps you wanted her to talk into your machines. I hope I've not done wrong; but really you see such queer people sometimes—you'll excuse me. I'm sure, sir—

HIGGINS Oh, that's all right, Mrs Pearce. Has she an interesting accent?

MRS PEARCE Oh, something dreadful, sir, really. I don't know how you can take an interest in it.

HIGGINS [to Pickering] Let's have her up. Shew her up, Mrs Pearce [he rushes across to his working table and picks out a cylinder to use on the phonograph].

MRS PEARCE [only half resigned to it] Very well, sir. It's for you to say. [She goes downstairs.]

HIGGINS This is rather a bit of luck. I'll shew you how I make records. We'll set her talking; and I'll take it down first in Bell's visible Speech; then in broad Romic, and then we'll get her on the phonograph so that you can turn her on as often as you like with the written transcript before you.

MRS PEARCE [returning] This is the young woman, sir.

The flower girl enters in state. She has a hat with three ostrich feathers, orange, sky-blue, and red. She has a nearly clean apron, and the shoddy coat has been tidied a little. The pathos of this deplorable figure, with its innocent vanity and consequential air, touches Pickering, who has already straightened himself in the presence of

Mrs Pearce But as to Higgins, the only distinction he makes between men and women is that when he is neither bullying nor exclaiming to the heavens against some feather-weight cross he coaxes women as a child coaxes its nurse when it wants to get anything out of her

HIGGINS [*brusquely, recognizing her with unconcealed disappointment, and at once, babylike, making an intolerable grievance of it*] Why, this is the girl I jotted down last night She's no use I've got all the records I want of the Lisson Grove lingo, and I'm not going to waste another cylinder on it. [*To the girl*] Be off with you. I don't want you

THE FLOWER GIRL Don't you be so saucy You aint heard what I come for yet [*To Mrs Pearce, who is waiting at the door for further instructions*] Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

MRS PEARCE Nonsense, girl! what do you think a gentleman like Mr Higgins cares what you came in?

THE FLOWER GIRL Oh, we are proud! He aint above giving lessons, not him I heard him say so Well, I aint come here to ask for any compliment, and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere.

HIGGINS Good enough for what?

THE FLOWER GIRL Good enough for ye-oo Now you know, dont you? I'm come to have lessons, I am And to pay for em too make no mistake

HIGGINS [*stupent*] Well!!! [*Recovering his breath with a gasp*] What do you expect me to say to you?

THE FLOWER GIRL Well, if you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think. Don't I tell you I'm bringing you business?

HIGGINS Pickering shall we ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out of the window?

THE FLOWER GIRL [*running away in terror to the piano, where she turns at bay*] Ah-ah-oh-ow-ow-oo! [*Wounded and whimpering*] I wont be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any lady

Motionless, the two men stare at her from the other side of the room, amazed

PICKERING [*gently*] What is it you want, my girl?

THE FLOWER GIRL I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road But they wont take me unless I can talk more genteel He said he could teach me Well, here I am ready to pay him—not asking any favor—and he

treats me as if I was dirt.

MRS PEARCE How can you be such a foolish ignorant girl as to think you could afford to pay Mr Higgins?

THE FLOWER GIRL Why shouldnt I? I know what lessons cost as well as you do, and I'm ready to pay.

HIGGINS How much?

THE FLOWER GIRL [*coming back to him, triumphant*] Now youre talking! I thought you'd come off it when you saw a chance of getting back a bit of what you chucked at me last night [*Confidentially*] You had a drop in, hadnt you?

HIGGINS [*peremptorily*] Sit down

THE FLOWER GIRL Oh, if youre going to make a compliment of it—

HIGGINS [*thundering at her*] Sit down

MRS PEARCE [*severely*] Sit down, girl Do as youre told [*She places the stray chair near the hearthrug between Higgins and Pickering, and stands behind it waiting for the girl to sit down*]

THE FLOWER GIRL Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo! [*She stands, half rebellious, half bewildered*]

PICKERING [*very courteous*] Wont you sit down?

LIZA [*coolly*] Don't mind if I do [*She sits down Pickering returns to the hearthrug*]

HIGGINS Whats your name?

THE FLOWER GIRL Liza Doolittle

HIGGINS [*declaiming gravely*]

[*Eliza, Elizabeth, Betsy and Bess, They went to the woods to get a bird's nest*]

PICKERING They found a nest with four eggs in it

HIGGINS They took one apiece, and left three in it

[*They laugh heartily at their own wit*]

LIZA Oh, dont be silly

MRS PEARCE You mustnt speak to the gentleman like that

LIZA Well, why wont he speak sensible to me?

HIGGINS Come back to business How much do you propose to pay me for the lessons?

LIZA Oh, I know whats right A lady friend of mine gets French lessons for eighteen-pence an hour from a real French gentleman Well, you wouldnt have the face to ask me the same for teaching me my own language as you would for French, so I wont give more than a shilling Take it or leave it

HIGGINS [*walking up and down the room, rattling his keys and his cash in his pockets*] You

know, Pickering, if you consider a shilling, not as a simple shilling, but as a percentage of this girl's income, it works out as fully equivalent to sixty or seventy guineas from a millionaire

PICKERING How so?

HIGGINS Figure it out A millionaire has about £150 a day. She earns about half-a-crown.

LIZA [*haughtily*] Who told you I only—

HIGGINS [*continuing*] She offers me two-fifths of her day's income for a lesson Two-fifths of a millionaire's income for a day would be somewhere about £60, It's handsome By George, it's enormous! it's the biggest offer I ever had.

LIZA [*rising, terrified*] Sixty pounds! What are you talking about? I never offered you sixty pounds Where would I get—

HIGGINS Hold your tongue.

LIZA [*weeping*] But I aint got sixty pounds Oh—

MRS PEARCE Dont cry, you silly girl Sit down Nobody is going to touch your money

HIGGINS Somebody is going to touch you, with a broomstick, if you dont stop snivelling Sit down

LIZA [*obeying slowly*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-oo-o! One would think you was my father.

HIGGINS If I decide to teach you, I'll be worse than two fathers to you Here [*he offers her his silk handkerchief*]

LIZA. Whats this for?

HIGGINS To wipe your eyes To wipe any part of your face that feels moist Remember thats your handkerchief; and thats your sleeve Dont mistake the one for the other if you wish to become a lady in a shop

Liza, utterly bewildered, stares helplessly at him

MRS PEARCE It's no use talking to her like that, Mr Higgins. she doesnt understand you, Besides, youre quite wrong she doesnt do it that way at all [*she takes the handkerchief*]

LIZA [*snatching it*] Here! You give me that handkerchief He give it to me, not to you

PICKERING [*laughing*] He did I think it must be regarded as her property, Mrs Pearce

MRS PEARCE [*resigning herself*] Serve you right, Mr Higgins

PICKERING Higgins: I'm interested What about the ambassador's garden party? I'll say youre the greatest teacher alive if you make that good I'll bet you all the expenses

of the experiment you cant do it And I'll pay for the lessons.

LIZA Oh, you are real good Thank you, Captain

HIGGINS [*tempted, looking at her*] It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low—so horribly dirty—

LIZA [*protesting extremely*] Ah-ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo-oo!!! I aint dirty I washed my face and hands afore I come, I did

PICKERING Youre certainly not going to turn her head with flattery, Higgins

MRS PEARCE [*uneasy*] Oh, dont say that, sir theres more ways than one of turning a girl's head, and nobody can do it better than Mr Higgins, though he may not always mean it. I do hope, sir, you wont encourage him to do anything foolish

HIGGINS [*becoming excited as the idea grows on him*] What is life but a series of inspired folhes? The difficulty is to find them to do Never lose a chance it doesnt come every day. I shall make a duchess of this draggle-tailed guttersnipe

LIZA [*strongly deprecating this view of her*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo!

HIGGINS [*carried away*] Yes in six months—in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue—I'll take her anywhere and pass her off as anything. We'll start to-day. now! this moment! Take her away and clean her, Mrs Pearce Monkey Brand if it wont come off any other way Is there a good fire in the kitchen?

MRS PEARCE [*protesting*] Yes; but—

HIGGINS [*storming on*] Take all her clothes off and burn them Ring up Whiteley or somebody for new ones Wrap her up in brown paper til they come.

LIZA. Youre no gentleman, youre not, to talk of such things. I'm a good girl, I am; and I know what the like of you are, I do

HIGGINS. We want none of your Lisson Grove prudery here, young woman Youve got to learn to behave like a duchess. Take her away, Mrs Pearce If she gives you any trouble, wallop her.

LIZA [*springing up and running between Pickering and Mrs Pearce for protection*] No! I'll call the police, I will

MRS PEARCE But Ive no place to put her

HIGGINS Put her in the dustbin

LIZA Ah-ab ah-ow-ow-oo!

PICKERING. Oh come, Higgins! be reasonable.

MRS PEARCE [*resolutely*] You must be reasonable, Mr Higgins really you must You cant walk over everybody like this

Higgins, thus scolded, subsides *The hurricane is succeeded by a zephyr of amiable surprise*

HIGGINS [*with professional exquisiteness of modulation*] I walk over everybody! My dear Mrs Pearce, my dear Pickering, I never had the slightest intention of walking over anyone All I propose is that we should be kind to this poor girl We must help her to prepare and fit herself for her new station in life If I did not express myself clearly it was because I did not wish to hurt her delicacy, or yours

Liza, reassured, steals back to her chair

MRS PEARCE [*to Pickering*] Well, did you ever hear anything like that, sir?

PICKERING [*laughing heartily*] Never, Mrs Pearce never

HIGGINS [*patiently*] Whats the matter?

MRS PEARCE Well, the matter is, sir, that you cant take a girl up like that as if you were picking up a pebble on the beach

HIGGINS Why not?

MRS PEARCE. Why not! But you dont know anything about her What about her parents? She may be married.

LIZA Garn!

HIGGINS There! As the girl very properly says, Garn! Married indeed! Dont you know that a woman of that class looks a worn out drudge of fifty a year after she's married?

LIZA Whood marry me?

HIGGINS [*suddenly resorting to the most thrillingly beautiful low tones in his best elocutionary style*] By George, Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the dead bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before Ive done with you

MRS PEARCE Nonsense, sir You mustnt talk like that to her

LIZA [*rising and squaring herself determinedly*] I'm going away He's off his chump, he is I dont want no balmes teaching me

HIGGINS [*wounded in his tenderest point by her insensibility to his elocution*] Oh, indeed! I'm mad, am I? Very well, Mrs Pearce you neednt order the new clothes for her Throw her out

LIZA [*whispering*] Nah-ow You got no right to touch me

MRS PEARCE You see now what comes of being saucy [*Indicating the door*] This way, please

LIZA [*almost in tears*] I didnt want no clothes I wouldnt have taken them [*she throws away the handkerchief*] I can buy my own clothes

HIGGINS [*defily retrieving the handkerchief and intercepting her on her reluctant way to the door*] Youre an ungrateful wicked girl This is my return for offering to take you out of the gutter and dress you beautifully and make a lady of you

MRS PEARCE Stop, Mr Higgins I wont allow it It's you that are wicked Go home to your parents, girl, and tell them to take better care of you

LIZA I aint got no parents They told me I was big enough to earn my own living and turned me out

MRS PEARCE Wheres your mother?

LIZA. I aint got no mother Her that turned me out was my sixth stepmother But I done without them And I'm a good girl, I am

HIGGINS Very well then, what on earth is all this fuss about? The girl doesnt belong to anybody—is no use to anybody but me [*He goes to Mrs Pearce and begins coaxing*] You can adopt her, Mrs Pearce I'm sure a daughter would be a great amusement to you Now dont make any more fuss Take her downstairs, and—

MRS PEARCE But whats to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Do be sensible, sir

HIGGINS Oh, pay her whatever is necessary put it down in the housekeeping book [*Impatiently*] What on earth will she want with money? She'll have her food and her clothes She'll only drink if you give her money

LIZA [*turning on him*] Oh you are a brute It's a lie nobody ever saw the sign of liquor on me [*She goes back to her chair and plants herself there defiantly*]

PICKERING [*in good-humored remonstrance*] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS [*looking critically at her*] Oh no, I dont think so Not any feelings that we need bother about [*Cheerily*] Have you, Eliza?

LIZA I got my feelings same as anyone else

HIGGINS [*to Pickering, reflectively*] You see the difficulty?

PICKERING Eh? What difficulty?

HIGGINS To get her to talk grammar The mere pronunciation is easy enough

LIZA I dont want to talk grammar I want

to talk like a lady.

MRS PEARCE Will you please keep to the point, Mr Higgins? I want to know on what terms the girl is to be here Is she to have any wages? And what is to become of her when youve finished your teaching? You must look ahead a little.

HIGGINS [*impatiently*] Whats to become of her if I leave her in the gutter? Tell me that, Mrs Pearce

MRS PEARCE Thats her own business, not yours, Mr Higgins

HIGGINS Well, when Ive done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter, and then it will be her own business again; so thats all right.

LIZA Oh, youve no feeling heart in you: you dont care for nothing but yourself [*she rises and takes the floor resolutely*] Here! Ive had enough of this I'm going [*making for the door*] You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought

HIGGINS [*snatching a chocolate cream from the piano, his eyes suddenly beginning to twinkle with mischief*] Have some chocolates, Eliza

LIZA [*halting, tempted*] How do I know what might be in them? Ive heard of girls being drugged by the like of you

Higgins whips out his penknife, cuts a chocolate in two, puts one half into his mouth and bolts it, and offers her the other half

HIGGINS Pledge of good faith, Eliza I eat one half you eat the other. [*Liza opens her mouth to retort he pops the half chocolate into it*] You shall have boxes of them, barrels of them, every day You shall live on them. Eh?

LIZA [*who has disposed of the chocolate after being nearly choked by it*] I wouldnt have ate it, only I'm too ladylike to take it out of my mouth

HIGGINS Listen, Eliza I think you said you came in a taxi

LIZA Well, what if I did? Ive as good a right to take a taxi as anyone else.

HIGGINS You have, Eliza, and in future you shall have as many taxis as you want You shall go up and down and round the town in a taxi every day Think of that, Eliza

MRS PEARCE Mr Higgins youre tempting the girl It's not right She should think of the future

HIGGINS At her age! Nonsense! Time enough to think of the future when you havnt any future to think of. No, Eliza do

as this lady does think of other people's futures; but never think of your own Think of chocolates, and taxis, and gold, and diamonds

LIZA No I dont want no gold and no diamonds. I'm a good girl, I am. [*She sits down again, with an attempt at dignity*]

HIGGINS You shall remain so, Eliza, under the care of Mrs Pearce And you shall marry an officer in the Guards, with a beautiful moustache the son of a marquis, who will disinherit him for marrying you, but will relent when he sees your beauty and goodness—

PICKERING. Excuse me, Higgins; but I really must interfere Mrs Pearce is quite right If this girl is to put herself in your hands for six months for an experiment in teaching, she must understand thoroughly what she's doing

HIGGINS How can she? She's incapable of understanding anything Besides, do any of us understand what we are doing? If we did, would we ever do it?

PICKERING Very clever, Higgins but not sound sense [*To Eliza*] Miss Doolittle—

LIZA [*overwhelmed*] Ah-ah-ow-oo!

HIGGINS. There! Thats all youll get out of Eliza Ah-ah-ow-oo! No use explaining As a military man you ought to know that Give her her orders thats what she wants Eliza you are to live here for the next six months, learning how to speak beautifully, like a lady in a florist's shop. If youre good and do whatever youre told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom, and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis If youre naughty and idle you will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs Pearce with a broomstick At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed. If the King finds out youre not a lady, you will be taken by the police to the Tower of London, where your head will be cut off as a warning to other presumptuous flower girls If you are not found out, you shall have a present of seven-and-sixpence to start life with as a lady in a shop. If you refuse this offer you will be a most ungrateful and wicked girl, and the angels will weep for you [*To Pickering*] Now are you satisfied, Pickering? [*To Mrs Pearce*] Can I put it more plainly and fairly, Mrs Pearce?

MRS PEARCE [*patiently*] I think youd better

let me speak to the girl properly in private I dont know that I can take charge of her or consent to the arrangement at all Of course I know you dont mean her any harm, but when you get what you call interested in people's accents, you never think or care what may happen to them or you Come with me, Eliza

HIGGINS Thats all right. Thank you, Mrs Pearce Bundle her off to the bath-room

LIZA [*rising reluctantly and suspiciously*] Youre a great bully, you are I wont stay here if I dont like I wont let nobody wallop me I never asked to go to Bucknam Palace, I didnt I was never in trouble with the police, not me I'm a good girl—

MRS PEARCE Dont answer back, girl You dont understand the gentleman Come with me [*She leads the way to the door, and holds it open for Eliza*]

LIZA [*as she goes out*] Well, what I say is right. I wont go near the King, not if I'm going to have my head cut off If I'd known what I was letting myself in for, I wouldnt have come here I always been a good girl, and I never offered to say a word to him, and I dont owe him nothing, and I dont care, and I wont be put upon, and I have my feelings the same as anyone else—

Mrs Pearce shuts the door, and Eliza's plaints are no longer audible Pickering comes from the hearth to the chair and sits astride it with his arms on the back

PICKERING Excuse the straight question, Higgins Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?

HIGGINS [*moodily*] Have you ever met a man of good character where women are concerned?

PICKERING Yes very frequently

HIGGINS [*dogmatically, lifting himself on his hands to the level of the piano, and sitting on it with a bounce*] Well, I havnt. I find that the moment I let a woman make friends with me, she becomes jealous, exacting, suspicious, and a damned nuisance I find that the moment I let myself make friends with a woman, I become selfish and tyrannical Women upset everything When you let them into your life, you find that the woman is driving at one thing and youre driving at another

PICKERING At what, for example?

HIGGINS [*coming off the piano restlessly*] Oh, Lord knows! I suppose the woman wants to

live her own life, and the man wants to live his, and each tries to drag the other on to the wrong track One wants to go north and the other south, and the result is that both have to go east, though they both hate the east wind. [*He sits down on the bench at the keyboard*] So here I am, a confirmed old bachelor, and likely to remain so

PICKERING [*rising and standing over him gravely*] Come, Higgins! You know what I mean If I'm to be in this business I shall feel responsible for that girl I hope it's understood that no advantage is to be taken of her position

HIGGINS What! That thing! Sacred, I assure you [*Rising to explain*] You see, she'll be a pupil, and teaching would be impossible unless pupils were sacred Ive taught scores of American millionairesses how to speak English the best looking women in the world I'm seasoned They might as well be blocks of wood I might as well be a block of wood It's—

Mrs Pearce opens the door She has Eliza's hat in her hand Pickering retires to the easy-chair at the hearth and sits down

HIGGINS [*eagerly*] Well, Mrs Pearce is it all right?

MRS PEARCE [*at the door*] I just wish to trouble you with a word, if I may, Mr Higgins

HIGGINS Yes, certainly Come in [*She comes forward*] Dont burn that, Mrs Pearce I'll keep it as a curiosity [*He takes the hat*]

MRS PEARCE Handle it carefully, sir, please. I had to promise her not to burn it, but I had better put it in the oven for a while

HIGGINS [*putting it down hastily on the piano*] Oh! thank you Well, what have you to say to me?

PICKERING Am I in the way?

MRS PEARCE Not at all, sir Mr Higgins will you please be very particular what you say before the girl?

HIGGINS [*sternly*] Of course I'm always particular about what I say Why do you say this to me?

MRS PEARCE [*unmoved*] No, sir youre not at all particular when youve mislaid anything or when you get a little impatient Now it doesnt matter before me I'm used to it. But you really must not swear before the girl

HIGGINS [*indignantly*] I swear! [*Most em-*

PYGMALION

phatically] I never swear. I detest the habit. What the devil do you mean?

MRS PEARCE [*stolidly*] That's what I mean, sir. You swear a great deal too much. I don't mind you damning and blasting, and what the devil and where the devil and who the devil—

HIGGINS Mrs Pearce. this language from your lips! Really!

MRS PEARCE [*not to be put off*]—but there is a certain word I must ask you not to use. The girl has just used it herself because the bath was too hot. It begins with the same letter as bath. She knows no better: she learnt it at her mother's knee. But she must not hear it from your lips.

HIGGINS [*loftily*] I cannot charge myself with having ever uttered it, Mrs Pearce. [*She looks at him steadfastly. He adds, hiding an uneasy conscience with a judicial air*] Except perhaps in a moment of extreme and justifiable excitement.

MRS PEARCE Only this morning, sir, you applied it to your boots, to the butter, and to the brown bread.

HIGGINS Oh, that! Mere alliteration, Mrs Pearce, natural to a poet.

MRS PEARCE Well, sir, whatever you choose to call it, I beg you not to let the girl hear you repeat it.

HIGGINS Oh, very well, very well. Is that all?

MRS PEARCE No sir. We shall have to be very particular with this girl as to personal cleanliness.

HIGGINS Certainly, Quite right. Most important.

MRS PEARCE I mean not to be slovenly about her dress or untidy in leaving things about.

HIGGINS [*going to her solemnly*] Just so. I intended to call your attention to that. [*He passes on to Pickering, who is enjoying the conversation immensely*] It is these little things that matter, Pickering. Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves as is true of personal habits as of money. [*He comes to anchor on the hearthrug, with the air of a man in an unassailable position*]

MRS PEARCE Yes, sir. Then might I ask you not to come down to breakfast in your dressing-gown, or at any rate not to use it as a napkin to the extent you do, sir. And if

not to put the porridge saucepan out of hand on the clean tablecloth, it would be a better example to the girl. You know you nearly choked yourself with a fishbone jam only last week.

HIGGINS [*routed from the hearthrug and going back to the piano*] I may do these sometimes in absence of mind, but I don't do them habitually. [*Angrily*] In any way: my dressing-gown smells most ably of benzine.

MRS PEARCE No doubt it does, Mr Higgins. But if you will wipe your fingers—

HIGGINS [*yelling*] Oh very well, very well. I'll wipe them in my hair in future.

MRS PEARCE I hope you're not offending Mr Higgins.

HIGGINS [*shocked at finding himself incapable of an unamiable sentiment*] Not at all. You're quite right, Mrs Pearce. I shall be particularly careful before then. Is that all?

MRS PEARCE No, sir. Might she use any of those Japanese dresses you brought back abroad? I really can't put her back in old things.

HIGGINS Certainly, Anything you like. Is that all?

MRS PEARCE Thank you, sir. That's all [*goes out*].

HIGGINS You know, Pickering, that I have the most extraordinary ideas about my daughter. Here I am, a shy, diffident sort of man who has never been able to feel really grown-up and tremendous, like other chaps. And yet I am so firmly persuaded that I'm an arbitrary bearing bossing kind of person I can't do anything for it.

Mrs Pearce returns

MRS PEARCE If you please, sir, the trouble is beginning already. There's a dustman on the stairs, Alfred Doolittle, wants to see you. He says you have his daughter here.

PICKERING [*rising*] Phew! I say! [*He goes out and treats to the hearthrug*].

HIGGINS [*promptly*] Send the blackguard out!

MRS PEARCE Oh, very well, sir [*She goes out*].

PICKERING He may not be a blackguard, Higgins.

HIGGINS Nonsense. Of course he's a blackguard.

PICKERING Whether he is or not, I'm

If theres any trouble he shall have it with me, not I with him And we are sure to get something interesting out of him

PICKERING About the girl?

HIGGINS No I mean his dialect

PICKERING Oh!

MRS PEARCE [*at the door*] Doolittle, sir [*She admits Doolittle and retires*]

Alfred Doolittle is an elderly but vigorous dustman, clad in the costume of his profession, including a hat with a back brim covering his neck and shoulders He has well marked and rather interesting features, and seems equally free from fear and conscience He has a remarkably expressive voice, the result of a habit of giving vent to his feelings without reserve His present pose is that of wounded honor and stern resolution

DOOLITTLE [*at the door, uncertain which of the two gentlemen is his man*] Professor Higgins?

HIGGINS Here Good morning Sit down

DOOLITTLE Morning, Governor [*He sits down magisterially*] I come about a very serious matter, Governor

HIGGINS [*to Pickering*] Brought up in Hounslow Mother Welsh, I should think [*Doolittle opens his mouth, amazed Higgins continues*] What do you want, Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE [*menacingly*] I want my daughter thats what I want See?

HIGGINS Of course you do Youre her father, arnt you? You dont suppose anyone else wants her, do you? I'm glad to see you have some spark of family feeling left She's upstairs Take her away at once

DOOLITTLE [*rising, fearfully taken aback*] What!

HIGGINS Take her away Do you suppose I'm going to keep your daughter for you?

DOOLITTLE [*remonstrating*] Now, now, look here, Governor Is this reasonable? Is it fairly to take advantage of a man like this? The girl belongs to me You got her Where do I come in? [*He sits down again*]

HIGGINS Your daughter had the audacity to come to my house and ask me to teach her how to speak properly so that she could get a place in a flower-shop This gentleman and my housekeeper have been here all the time [*Bullying him*] How dare you come here and attempt to blackmail me? You sent her here on purpose

DOOLITTLE [*protesting*] No, Governor.

HIGGINS You must have How else could you possibly know that she is here?

DOOLITTLE Dont take a man up like that, Governor

HIGGINS The police shall take you up This is a plant—a plot to extort money by threats I shall telephone for the police [*He goes resolutely to the telephone and opens the directory*]

DOOLITTLE Have I asked you for a brass farthing? I leave it to the gentleman here have I said a word about money?

HIGGINS [*throwing the book aside and marching down on Doolittle with a poser*] What else did you come for?

DOOLITTLE [*sweetly*] Well, what would a man come for? Be human, Governor

HIGGINS [*disarmed*] Alfred did you put her up to it?

DOOLITTLE So help me, Governor, I never did I take my Bible oath I aint seen the girl these two months past

HIGGINS Then how did you know she was here?

DOOLITTLE [*"most musical, most melancholy"*] I'll tell you, Governor, if youll only let me get a word in I'm willing to tell you I'm wanting to tell you I'm waiting to tell you

HIGGINS Pickering this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild "I'm willing to tell you I'm wanting to tell you I'm waiting to tell you" Sentimental rhetoric! thats the Welsh strain in him It also accounts for his mendacity and dishonesty

PICKERING Oh, please, Higgins I'm west country myself [*To Doolittle*] How did you know the girl was here if you didnt send her?

DOOLITTLE It was like this, Governor The girl took a boy in the taxi to give him a jaunt. Son of her landlady, he is He hung about on the chance of her giving him another ride home Well, she sent him back for her luggage when she heard you was willing for her to stop here I met the boy at the corner of Long Acre and Endell Street

HIGGINS Public house Yes?

DOOLITTLE The poor man's club, Governor why shouldnt I?

PICKERING Do let him tell his story, Higgins

DOOLITTLE He told me what was up And I ask you, what was my feelings and my duty as a father? I says to the boy, "You bring me the luggage," I says—

PICKERING Why didnt you go for it yourself?

DOOLITTLE Landlady wouldnt have trusted

me with it, Governor. She's that kind of woman. you know I had to give the boy a penny afore he trusted me with it, the little swine. I brought it to her just to oblige you like, and make myself agreeable. That's all.

HIGGINS. How much luggage?

DOOLITTLE. Musical instrument, Governor. A few pictures, a trifle of jewellery, and a bird-cage. She said she didn't want no clothes. What was I to think from that, Governor? I ask you as a parent what was I to think?

HIGGINS. So you came to rescue her from worse than death, eh?

DOOLITTLE [*appreciatively relieved at being so well understood*]. Just so, Governor. That's right.

PICKERING. But why did you bring her luggage if you intended to take her away?

DOOLITTLE. Have I said a word about taking her away? Have I now?

HIGGINS [*determinedly*]. You're going to take her away, double quick. [*He crosses to the hearth and rings the bell*].

DOOLITTLE [*rising*]. No, Governor. Don't say that. I'm not the man to stand in my girl's light. Here's a career opening for her, as you might say, and—

Mrs Pearce opens the door and awaits orders.

HIGGINS. Mrs Pearce, this is Eliza's father. He has come to take her away. Give her to him. [*He goes back to the piano, with an air of washing his hands of the whole affair*].

DOOLITTLE. No. This is a misunderstanding. Listen here—

MRS PEARCE. He can't take her away, Mr Higgins. how can he? You told me to burn her clothes.

DOOLITTLE. That's right. I can't carry the girl through the streets like a blooming monkey, can I? I put it to you.

HIGGINS. You have put it to me that you want your daughter. Take your daughter. If she has no clothes go out and buy her some.

DOOLITTLE [*desperate*]. Where's the clothes she came in? Did I burn them or did your missus here?

MRS PEARCE. I am the housekeeper, if you please. I have sent for some clothes for your girl. When they come you can take her away. You can wait in the kitchen. This way, please.

Doolittle, much troubled, accompanies her to the door, then hesitates, finally turns confidentially to Higgins.

DOOLITTLE. Listen here, Governor. You

and me is men of the world, aint we?

HIGGINS. Oh! Men of the world, are we? You'd better go, Mrs Pearce.

MRS PEARCE. I think so, indeed, sir. [*She goes, with dignity*].

PICKERING. The floor is yours, Mr Doolittle.

DOOLITTLE [*to Pickering*]. I thank you, Governor. [*To Higgins, who takes refuge on the piano bench, a little overwhelmed by the proximity of his visitor, for Doolittle has a professional flavor of dust about him*]. Well, the truth is, I've taken a sort of fancy to you, Governor, and if you want the girl, I'm not so set on having her back home again but what I might be open to an arrangement. Regarded in the light of a young woman, she's a fine handsome girl. As a daughter she's not worth her keep, and so I tell you straight. All I ask is my rights as a father, and you're the last man alive to expect me to let her go for nothing, for I can see you're one of the straight sort, Governor. Well, what's a five-pound note to you? And what's Eliza to me? [*He returns to his chair and sits down judicially*].

PICKERING. I think you ought to know, Doolittle, that Mr Higgins's intentions are entirely honorable.

DOOLITTLE. Course they are, Governor. If I thought they wasn't, I'd ask fifty.

HIGGINS [*revolted*]. Do you mean to say, you callous rascal, that you would sell your daughter for £50?

DOOLITTLE. Not in a general way I wouldn't; but to oblige a gentleman like you I'd do a good deal, I do assure you.

PICKERING. Have you no morals, man?

DOOLITTLE [*unabashed*]. Can't afford them, Governor. Neither could you if you was as poor as me. Not that I mean any harm, you know. But if Liza is going to have a bit out of this, why not me too?

HIGGINS [*troubled*]. I don't know what to do, Pickering. There can be no question that as a matter of morals it's a positive crime to give this chap a farthing. And yet I feel a sort of rough justice in his claim.

DOOLITTLE. That's it, Governor. That's all I say. A father's heart, as it were.

PICKERING. Well, I know the feeling; but really it seems hardly right—

DOOLITTLE. Don't say that, Governor. Don't look at it that way. What am I, Governors both? I ask you, what am I? I'm one of the undeserving poor that's what I am. Think of what that means to a man. It means that

If theres any trouble he shall have it with me, not I with him And we are sure to get something interesting out of him

PICKERING About the girl?

HIGGINS No I mean his dialect

PICKERING Oh!

MRS PEARCE [*at the door*] Doolittle, sir [*She admits Doolittle and retires*]

Alfred Doolittle is an elderly but vigorous dustman, clad in the costume of his profession, including a hat with a back brim covering his neck and shoulders He has well marked and rather interesting features, and seems equally free from fear and conscience He has a remarkably expressive voice, the result of a habit of giving vent to his feelings without reserve His present pose is that of wounded honor and stern resolution

DOOLITTLE [*at the door, uncertain which of the two gentlemen is his man*] Professor Higgins?

HIGGINS Here Good morning Sit down

DOOLITTLE Morning, Governor [*He sits down magisterially*] I come about a very serious matter, Governor

HIGGINS [*to Pickering*] Brought up in Hounslow Mother Welsh, I should think [*Doolittle opens his mouth, amazed Higgins continues*] What do you want, Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE [*menacingly*] I want my daughter thats what I want See?

HIGGINS Of course you do Youre her father, arnt you? You dont suppose anyone else wants her, do you? I'm glad to see you have some spark of family feeling left She's upstairs Take her away at once

DOOLITTLE [*rising, fearfully taken aback*] What!

HIGGINS Take her away Do you suppose I'm going to keep your daughter for you?

DOOLITTLE [*remonstrating*] Now, now, look here, Governor Is this reasonable? Is it fairly to take advantage of a man like this? The girl belongs to me You got her Where do I come in? [*He sits down again*]

HIGGINS Your daughter had the audacity to come to my house and ask me to teach her how to speak properly so that she could get a place in a flower-shop This gentleman and my housekeeper have been here all the time [*Bullying him*] How dare you come here and attempt to blackmail me? You sent her here on purpose

DOOLITTLE [*protesting*] No, Governor

HIGGINS You must have How else could you possibly know that she is here?

DOOLITTLE Dont take a man up like that, Governor

HIGGINS The police shall take you up This is a plant—a plot to extort money by threats I shall telephone for the police [*He goes resolutely to the telephone and opens the directory*]

DOOLITTLE Have I asked you for a brass farthing? I leave it to the gentleman here have I said a word about money?

HIGGINS [*throwing the book aside and marching down on Doolittle with a poser*] What else did you come for?

DOOLITTLE [*screetly*] Well, what would a man come for? Be human, Governor

HIGGINS [*disarmed*] Alfred did you put her up to it?

DOOLITTLE So help me, Governor, I never did I take my Bible oath I aint seen the girl these two months past

HIGGINS Then how did you know she was here?

DOOLITTLE [*"most musical, most melancholy"*] I'll tell you, Governor, if youll only let me get a word in I'm willing to tell you I'm wanting to tell you I'm waiting to tell you

HIGGINS Pickering this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild "I'm willing to tell you I'm wanting to tell you I'm waiting to tell you" Sentimental rhetoric! thats the Welsh strain in him It also accounts for his mendacity and dishonesty

PICKERING Oh, please, Higgins I'm west country myself [*To Doolittle*] How did you know the girl was here if you didnt send her?

DOOLITTLE It was like this, Governor The girl took a boy in the taxi to give him a jaunt Son of her landlady, he is He hung about on the chance of her giving him another ride home Well, she sent him back for her luggage when she heard you was willing for her to stop here I met the boy at the corner of Long Acre and Endell Street

HIGGINS Public house Yes?

DOOLITTLE The poor man's club, Governor why shouldnt I?

PICKERING Do let him tell his story, Higgins

DOOLITTLE He told me what was up And I ask you, what was my feelings and my duty as a father? I says to the boy, "You bring me the luggage," I says—

PICKERING Why didnt you go for it yourself?

DOOLITTLE Landlady wouldnt have trusted

he's up agen middle class morality all the time If theres anything going, and I put in for a bit of it, it's always the same story "Youre undeserving, so you cant have it." But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow's that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband I dont need less than a deserving man I need more I dont eat less hearty than him, and I drink a lot more I want a bit of amusement, cause I'm a thinking man I want cheerfulness and a song and a band when I feel low Well, they charge me just the same for everything as they charge the deserving What is middle class morality? Just an excuse for never giving me anything Therefore, I ask you, as two gentlemen, not to play that game on me I'm playing straight with you I aint pretending to be deserving I'm undeserving, and I mean to go on being undeserving I like it, and thats the truth Will you take advantage of a man's nature to do him out of the price of his own daughter what he's brought up and fed and clothed by the sweat of his brow until she's growed big enough to be interesting to you two gentlemen? Is five pounds unreasonable? I put it to you, and I leave it to you

HIGGINS [*rising, and going over to Pickering*] Pickering if we were to take this man in hand for three months, he could choose between a seat in the Cabinet and a popular pulpit in Wales

PICKERING What do you say to that, Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE Not me, Governor, thank you kindly Ive heard all the preachers and all the prime ministers—for I'm a thinking man and game for politics or religion or social reform same as all the other amusements—and I tell you it's a dog's life any way you look at it Undeserving poverty is my line Taking one station in society with another, it's—it's—well, it's the only one that has any ginger in it, to my taste

HIGGINS I suppose we must give him a fiver

PICKERING He'll make a bad use of it, I'm afraid

DOOLITTLE Not me, Governor, so help me I wont. Dont you be afraid that I'll save it and spare it and live idly on it There wont be a penny of it left by Monday I'll have to go to work same as if I'd never had it. It

wont pauperize me, you bet Just one good spree for myself and the missus, giving pleasure to ourselves and employment to others, and satisfaction to you to think it's not been throwed away You couldnt spend it better

HIGGINS [*taking out his pocketbook and coming between Doolittle and the piano*] This is irresistible Lets give him ten [*He offers two notes to the dustman*]

DOOLITTLE No, Governor She wouldnt have the heart to spend ten, and perhaps I shouldnt neither Ten pounds is a lot of money it makes a man feel prudent like, and then goodbye to happiness You give me what I ask you, Governor not a penny more, and not a penny less

PICKERING Why dont you marry that missus of yours? I rather draw the line at encouraging that sort of immorality.

DOOLITTLE Tell her so, Governor tell her so I'm willing It's me that suffers by it Ive no hold on her I got to be agreeable to her I got to give her presents I got to buy her clothes something sinful I'm a slave to that woman, Governor, just because I'm not her lawful husband And she knows it too Catch her marrying me! Take my advice, Governor marry Ehza while she's young and dont know no better If you dont youll be sorry for it after If you do, she'll be sorry for it after, but better her than you, because youre a man, and she's only a woman and dont know how to be happy anyhow

HIGGINS Pickering if we listen to this man another minute, we shall have no convictions left [*To Doolittle*] Five pounds I think you said

DOOLITTLE Thank you kindly, Governor

HIGGINS. Youre sure you wont take ten?

DOOLITTLE Not now Another time, Governor

HIGGINS [*handing him a five-pound note*] Here you are

DOOLITTLE Thank you, Governor Good morning [*He hurries to the door, anxious to get away with his booty When he opens it he is confronted with a dainty and exquisitely clean young Japanese lady in a simple blue cotton kimono printed cunningly with small white jasmine blossoms Mrs Pearce is with her He gets out of her way deferentially and apologizes*] Beg pardon, miss

THE JAPANESE LADY Garn! Dont you know your own daughter?

DOOLITTLE } *exclaiming* { Bly me! it's Eliza!
HIGGINS } *simul-* { Whats that! This!
PICKERING } *taneously* { By Jove!

LIZA Dont I look silly?

HIGGINS Silly?

MRS PEARCE [*at the door*] Now, Mr. Higgins, please dont say anything to make the girl conceited about herself.

HIGGINS [*conscientiously*] Oh! Quite right, Mrs Pearce. [*To Eliza*] Yes. damned silly

MRS PEARCE. Please, sir

HIGGINS [*correcting himself*] I mean extremely silly.

LIZA I should look all right with my hat on [*She takes up her hat, puts it on, and walks across the room to the fireplace with a fashionable air*]

HIGGINS A new fashion, by George! And it ought to look horrible!

DOOLITTLE [*with fatherly pride*] Well, I never thought she'd clean up as good looking as that, Governor She's a credit to me, aint she?

LIZA I tell you, it's easy to clean up here Hot and cold water on tap, just as much as you like, there is Woolly towels, there is; and a towel horse so hot, it burns your fingers Soft brushes to scrub yourself, and a wooden bowl of soap smelling like primroses Now I know why ladies is so clean. Washing's a treat for them. Wish they saw what it is for the like of me!

HIGGINS I'm glad the bathroom met with your approval

LIZA It didnt: not all of it, and I dont care who hears me say it Mrs Pearce knows

HIGGINS What was wrong, Mrs Pearce?

MRS PEARCE [*blandly*] Oh, nothing, sir. It doesnt matter

LIZA. I had a good mind to break it. I didnt know which way to look. But I hung a towel over it, I did

HIGGINS Over what?

MRS PEARCE Over the looking-glass, sir

HIGGINS Doolittle you have brought your daughter up too strictly.

DOOLITTLE Me! I never brought her up at all, except to give her a lick of a strap now and again Dont put it on me, Governor. She aint accustomed to it, you see thats all But she'll soon pick up your free-and-easy ways

LIZA I'm a good girl, I am, and I wont pick up no free-and-easy ways.

HIGGINS Eliza if you say again that youre a good girl, your father shall take you home

LIZA Not him You dont know my father All he come here for was to touch you for some money to get drunk on

DOOLITTLE Well, what else would I want money for? To put into the plate in church, I suppose [*She puts out her tongue at him. He is so incensed by this that Pickering presently finds it necessary to step between them*] Dont you give me none of your lip and dont let me hear you giving this gentleman any of it neither, or youll hear from me about it See?

HIGGINS. Have you any further advice to give her before you go, Doolittle? Your blessing, for instance

DOOLITTLE No, Governor. I aint such a mug as to put up my children to all I know myself. Hard enough to hold them in without that If you want Eliza's mind improved, Governor, you do it yourself with a strap So long, gentlemen [*He turns to go*]

HIGGINS [*impressively*] Stop Youll come regularly to see your daughter It's your duty, you know. My brother is a clergyman, and he could help you in your talks with her.

DOOLITTLE [*evasively*] Certainly I'll come, Governor. Not just this week, because I have a job at a distance But later on you may depend on me. Afternoon, gentlemen Afternoon, maam. [*He takes off his hat to Mrs Pearce, who disdains the salutation and goes out He winks at Higgins, thinking him probably a fellow-sufferer from Mrs Pearce's difficult disposition, and follows her*]

LIZA Dont you believe the old liar. He'd as soon you set a bull-dog on him as a clergyman You wont see him again in a hurry

HIGGINS I dont want to, Eliza Do you?

LIZA Not me I dont want never to see him again, I dont He's a disgrace to me, he is, collecting dust, instead of working at his trade.

PICKERING. What is his trade, Eliza?

LIZA. Taking money out of other people's pockets into his own His proper trade's a navvy; and he works at it sometimes too—for exercise—and earns good money at it Aint you going to call me Miss Doolittle any more?

PICKERING I beg your pardon, Miss Doolittle. It was a slip of the tongue

LIZA Oh, I dont mind; only it sounded so genteel I should just like to take a taxi to the corner of Tottenham Court Road and get out there and tell it to wait for me, just

to put the girls in their place a bit I wouldn't speak to them, you know

PICKERING Better wait til we get you something really fashionable

HIGGINS Besides, you shouldn't cut your old friends now that you have risen in the world That's what we call snobbery

LIZA You don't call the like of them my friends now, I should hope They've took it out of me often enough with their ridicule when they had the chance, and now I mean to get a bit of my own back But if I'm to have fashionable clothes, I'll wait I should like to have some Mrs Pearce says you're going to give me some to wear in bed at night different to what I wear in the daytime, but it do seem a waste of money when you could get something to shew Besides, I never could fancy changing into cold things on a winter night

MRS PEARCE [coming back] Now, Eliza The new things have come for you to try on

LIZA Ah-ow-oo-oo! [She rushes out]

MRS PEARCE [following her] Oh, don't rush about like that, girl [She shuts the door behind her]

HIGGINS Pickering we have taken on a stiff job

PICKERING [with conviction] Higgins we have

ACT III

It is Mrs Higgins's at-home day Nobody has yet arrived Her drawing room, in a flat on Chelsea Embankment, has three windows looking on the river, and the ceiling is not so lofty as it would be in an older house of the same pretension The windows are open, giving access to a balcony with flowers in pots If you stand with your face to the windows, you have the fireplace on your left and the door in the right-hand wall close to the corner nearest the windows

Mrs Higgins was brought up on Morris and Burne Jones, and her room, which is very unlike her son's room in Wimpole Street, is not crowded with furniture and little tables and nicknacks In the middle of the room there is a big ottoman, and this, with the carpet, the Morris wall-papers, and the Morris chintz window curtains and brocade covers of the ottoman and its cushions, supply all the ornament, and are much too handsome to be hidden by odds and ends of useless things A few good oil-paintings from the exhibitions in the Grosvenor Gallery thirty years ago (the Burne Jones, not the Whistler side of them) are on the

walls The only landscape is a Cecil Lawson on the scale of a Rubens There is a portrait of Mrs Higgins as she was when she defied fashion in her youth in one of the beautiful Rossetti costumes which, when caricatured by people who did not understand, led to the absurdities of popular estheticism in the eighteen-seventies.

In the corner diagonally opposite the door Mrs Higgins, now over sixty and long past taking the trouble to dress out of the fashion, sits writing at an elegantly simple writing-table with a bell button within reach of her hand There is a Chippendale chair further back in the room between her and the window nearest her side At the other side of the room, further forward, is an Elizabethan chair roughly carved in the taste of Inigo Jones On the same side a piano in a decorated case The corner between the fireplace and the windows is occupied by a divan cushioned in Morris chintz

It is between four and five in the afternoon

The door is opened violently, and Higgins enters with his hat on

MRS HIGGINS [dismayed] Henry [scolding him] What are you doing here today? It is my at-home day you promised not to come [As he bends to kiss her, she takes his hat off, and presents it to him]

HIGGINS Oh bother! [He throws the hat down on the table]

MRS HIGGINS Go home at once

HIGGINS [kissing her] I know, mother I came on purpose

MRS HIGGINS But you mustn't I'm serious Henry You offend all my friends they stop coming whenever they meet you

HIGGINS Nonsense! I know I have no small talk, but people don't mind [He sits on the settee]

MRS HIGGINS Oh! don't they? Small talk indeed! What about your large talk? Really, dear, you mustn't stay

HIGGINS I must I've a job for you A phonetic job

MRS HIGGINS No use, dear I'm sorry, but I can't get round your vowels, and though I like to get pretty postcards in your patent shorthand, I always have to read the copies in ordinary writing you so thoughtfully send me

HIGGINS Well, this isn't a phonetic job

MRS HIGGINS You said it was

HIGGINS Not your part of it. I've picked up a girl

MRS HIGGINS Does that mean that some

girl has picked you up?

HIGGINS Not at all I dont mean a love affair.

MRS HIGGINS What a pity!

HIGGINS Why?

MRS HIGGINS Well, you never fall in love with anyone under forty-five When will you discover that there are some rather nice-looking young women about?

HIGGINS Oh, I cant be bothered with young women My idea of a lovable woman is something as like you as possible I shall never get into the way of seriously liking young women; some habits he too deep to be changed [*Rising abruptly and walking about, jingling his money and his keys in his trouser pockets*] Besides, theyre all idiots

MRS HIGGINS Do you know what you would do if you really loved me, Henry?

HIGGINS Oh bother! What? Marry, I suppose?

MRS HIGGINS. No Stop fidgiting and take your hands out of your pockets [*With a gesture of despair, he obeys and sits down again*] Thats a good boy Now tell me about the girl

HIGGINS She's coming to see you

MRS HIGGINS I dont remember asking her.

HIGGINS You didnt I asked her If youd known her you wouldnt have asked her

MRS HIGGINS Indeed! Why?

HIGGINS Well, it's like this She's a common flower girl I picked her off the kerbstone

MRS HIGGINS And invited her to my at-home!

HIGGINS [*rising and coming to her to coax her*] Oh, that'll be all right Ive taught her to speak properly, and she has strict orders as to her behavior. She's to keep to two subjects: the weather and everybody's health—Fine day and How do you do, you know—and not to let herself go on things in general That will be safe.

MRS HIGGINS Safe! To talk about our health! about our insides! perhaps about our outsides! How could you be so silly, Henry?

HIGGINS [*impatiently*] Well, she must talk about something [*He controls himself and sits down again*] Oh, she'll be all right dont you fuss Pickering is in it with me Ive a sort of bet on that I'll pass her off as a duchess in six months I started on her some months ago, and she's getting on like a house on fire I shall win my bet She has a quick ear, and she's been easier to teach than my middle-

class pupils because she's had to learn a complete new language She talks English almost as you talk French

MRS HIGGINS Thats satisfactory, at all events

HIGGINS Well, it is and it isnt

MRS HIGGINS What does that mean?

HIGGINS You see, Ive got her pronunciation all right, but you have to consider not only how a girl pronounces, but what she pronounces, and thats where—

They are interrupted by the parlor-maid, announcing guests.

THE PARLOR-MAID Mrs and Miss Eynsford Hill. [*She withdraws*]

HIGGINS Oh Lord! [*He rises, snatches his hat from the table, and makes for the door, but before he reaches it his mother introduces him*]

Mrs and Miss Eynsford Hill are the mother and daughter who sheltered from the rain in Covent Garden The mother is well bred, quiet, and has the habitual anxiety of straitened means The daughter has acquired a gay air of being very much at home in society the bravado of genteel poverty

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*to Mrs Higgins*] How do you do? [*They shake hands*]

MISS EYNSFORD HILL How d'you do? [*She shakes*]

MRS HIGGINS [*introducing*] My son Henry.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL Your celebrated son! I have so longed to meet you, Professor Higgins

HIGGINS [*glumly, making no movement in her direction*] Delighted [*He backs against the piano and bows brusquely*]

MISS EYNSFORD HILL [*going to him with confident familiarity*] How do you do?

HIGGINS [*staring at her*] Ive seen you before somewhere I havnt the ghost of a notion where; but Ive heard your voice [*Drearily*] It doesnt matter. Youd better sit down

MRS HIGGINS Im sorry to say that my celebrated son has no manners You mustnt mind him

MISS EYNSFORD HILL [*gaily*] I dont [*She sits in the Elizabethan chair*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*a little bewildered*] Not at all [*She sits on the ottoman between her daughter and Mrs Higgins, who has turned her chair away from the writing-table*]

HIGGINS Oh, have I been rude? I didnt mean to be

He goes to the central window, through which, with his back to the company, he contemplates the

river and the flowers in Battersea Park on the opposite bank as if they were a frozen desert

The parlor-maid returns, ushering in Pickering

THE PARLOR-MAID Colonel Pickering [*She withdraws*]

PICKERING How do you do, Mrs Higgins?

MRS HIGGINS So glad you've come Do you know Mrs Eynsford Hill—Miss Eynsford Hill? [*Exchange of bows The Colonel brings the Chippendale chair a little forward between Mrs Hill and Mrs Higgins, and sits down*]

PICKERING Has Henry told you what we've come for?

HIGGINS [*over his shoulder*] We were interrupted damn it!

MRS HIGGINS Oh Henry, Henry, really!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*half rising*] Are we in the way?

MRS HIGGINS [*rising and making her sit down again*] No, no You couldn't have come more fortunately we want you to meet a friend of ours

HIGGINS [*turning hopefully*] Yes, by George! We want two or three people You'll do as well as anybody else

The parlor-maid returns, ushering Freddy

THE PARLOR-MAID Mr Eynsford Hill

HIGGINS [*almost audibly, past endurance*] God of Heaven! another of them

FREDDY [*shaking hands with Mrs Higgins*] Ahdedo?

MRS HIGGINS Very good of you to come [*Introducing*] Colonel Pickering

FREDDY [*bowing*] Ahdedo?

MRS HIGGINS I don't think you know my son, Professor Higgins

FREDDY [*going to Higgins*] Ahdedo?

HIGGINS [*looking at him much as if he were a pickpocket*] I'll take my oath I've met you before somewhere Where was it?

FREDDY I don't think so

HIGGINS [*resignedly*] It don't matter, anyhow Sit down

He shakes Freddy's hand, and almost slings him onto the ottoman with his face to the windows, then comes round to the other side of it

HIGGINS Well, here we are, anyhow! [*He sits down on the ottoman next Mrs Eynsford Hill, on her left*] And now, what the devil are we going to talk about until Eliza comes?

MRS HIGGINS Henry you are the life and soul of the Royal Society's soirées, but really you're rather trying on more commonplace occasions

HIGGINS Am I? Very sorry [*Beaming suddenly*] I suppose I am, you know [*Up-roariously*] Ha, ha!

MISS EYNSFORD HILL [*who considers Higgins quite eligible matrimonially*] I sympathize I haven't any small talk. If people would only be frank and say what they really think!

HIGGINS [*relapsing into gloom*] Lord forbid!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*taking up her daughter's cue*] But why?

HIGGINS What they think they ought to think is bad enough, Lord knows, but what they really think would break up the whole show Do you suppose it would be really agreeable if I were to come out now with what I really think?

MISS EYNSFORD HILL [*gaily*] Is it so very cynical?

HIGGINS Cynical! Who the dickens said it was cynical? I mean it wouldn't be decent.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*seriously*] Oh! I'm sure you don't mean that, Mr Higgins

HIGGINS You see, we're all savages, more or less We're supposed to be civilized and cultured—to know all about poetry and philosophy and art and science, and so on, but how many of us know even the meanings of these names? [*To Miss Hill*] What do you know of poetry? [*To Mrs Hill*] What do you know of science? [*Indicating Freddy*] What does he know of art or science or anything else? What the devil do you imagine I know of philosophy?

MRS HIGGINS [*warningly*] Or of manners, Henry?

THE PARLOR-MAID [*opening the door*] Miss Doolittle [*She withdraws*]

HIGGINS [*rising hastily and running to Mrs Higgins*] Here she is, mother [*He stands on tiptoe and makes signs over his mother's head to Eliza to indicate to her which lady is her hostess*]

Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite fluttered Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs Higgins with studied grace

LIZA [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful*] Mr Higgins told me I might come

MRS HIGGINS [*cordially*] Quite right I'm very glad indeed to see you

PICKERING How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

LIZA [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS EYNSFORD HILL I feel sure we have met before, Miss Doolittle I remember your eyes

LIZA How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My daughter Clara

LIZA How do you do?

CLARA [*impulsively*] How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes*]

FREDDY [*coming to their side of the ottoman*] I've certainly had the pleasure

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My son Freddy

LIZA How do you do?

Freddy bows and sits down in the Elizabethan chair, infatuated

HIGGINS [*suddenly*] By George, yes. it all comes back to me! [*They stare at him*] Covent Garden! [*Lamentably*] What a damned thing!

MRS HIGGINS Henry, please! [*He is about to sit on the edge of the table*] Don't sit on my writing-table you'll break it.

HIGGINS [*sulkily*] Sorry

He goes to the divan, stumbling into the fender and over the fire-irons on his way, extricating himself with muttered imprecations, and finishing his disastrous journey by throwing himself so impatiently on the divan that he almost breaks it Mrs Higgins looks at him, but controls herself and says nothing

A long and painful pause ensues.

MRS HIGGINS [*at last, conversationally*] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation

FREDDY Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right

FREDDY Killing!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold There's so much influenza about It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring

LIZA [*darkly*] My aunt died of influenza so they said

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*clicks her tongue sympa-*

thetically!!!

LIZA [*in the same tragic tone*] But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

MRS HIGGINS [*puzzled*] Done her in?

LIZA Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before I saw her with my own eyes Fairly blue with it, she was They all thought she was dead, but my father he kept lading gin down her throat til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*startled*] Dear me!

LIZA [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it, and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in

MRS EYNSFORD HILL What does doing her in mean?

HIGGINS [*hastily*] Oh, thats the new small talk To do a person in means to kill them

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*to Eliza, horrified*] You surely don't believe that your aunt was killed

LIZA Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat-pin, let alone a hat

MRS EYNSFORD HILL But it can't have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that It might have killed her

LIZA Not her Gin was mother's milk to her Besides, he'd poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it

MRS EYNSFORD HILL Do you mean that he drank?

LIZA Drank! My word! Something chronic.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL How dreadful for you!

LIZA Not a bit It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. [*Cheerfully*] On the burst, as you might say, from time to time And always more agreeable when he had a drop in When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpence and tell him to go out and not come back until he'd drunk himself cheerful and loving-like There's lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with [*Now quite at her ease*] You see, it's like this If a man has a bit of a conscience, it always takes him when he's sober, and then it makes him low-spirited A drop of booze just takes that off and makes him happy [*To Freddy, who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter*] Here! what

are you sniggering at?

FREDDY The new small talk You do it so awfully well

LIZA. If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtnt?

MRS HIGGINS [*interposing*] Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA. Well, thats a mercy, anyhow. [*Expansively*] What I always say is—

HIGGINS [*rising and looking at his watch*] Ahem!

LIZA [*looking round at him; taking the hint, and rising*] Well I must go [*They all rise Freddy goes to the door*] So pleased to have met you Goodbye [*She shakes hands with Mrs Higgins*]

MRS HIGGINS Goodbye

LIZA Goodbye, Colonel Pickering

PICKERING. Goodbye, Miss Doolittle [*They shake hands*]

LIZA [*nodding to the others*] Goodbye, all

FREDDY [*opening the door for her*] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle? If so—

LIZA Walk! Not bloody likely [*Sensation*] I am going in a taxi [*She goes out*]

Pickering gasps and sits down Freddy goes out on the balcony to catch another glimpse of Eliza

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*suffering from shock*] Well, I really cant get used to the new ways

CLARA [*throwing herself discontentedly into the Elizabethan chair*] Oh, it's all right mamma, quite right. People will think we never go anywhere or see anybody if you are so old-fashioned.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. I daresay I am very old-fashioned, but I do hope you wont begin using that expression, Clara I have got accustomed to hear you talking about men as rotters, and calling everything filthy and beastly, though I do think it horrible and unladylike But this last is really too much. Dont you think so, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING Dont ask me Ive been away in India for several years, and manners have changed so much that I sometimes dont know whether I'm at a respectable dinner-table or in a ship's fore-castle.

CLARA It's all a matter of habit Theres no right or wrong in it Nobody means anything by it And it's so quant, and gives such a smart emphasis to things that are not in

themselves very witty. I find the new small talk delightful and quite innocent.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*rising*] Well, after that, I think it's time for us to go

Pickering and Higgins rise.

CLARA [*rising*] Oh yes we have three at-homes to go to still Goodbye, Mrs Higgins. Goodbye, Colonel Pickering Goodbye, Professor Higgins

HIGGINS [*coming grimly at her from the divan, and accompanying her to the door*] Goodbye Be sure you try on that small talk at the three at-homes Dont be nervous about it. Pitch it in strong

CLARA [*all smiles*] I will. Goodbye. Such nonsense, all this early Victorian prudery!

HIGGINS [*tempting her*] Such damned nonsense!

CLARA Such bloody nonsense!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*convulsively*] Clara!

CLARA Ha' ha! [*She goes out radiant, conscious of being thoroughly up to date, and is heard descending the stairs in a stream of silvery laughter*]

FREDDY [*to the heavens at large*] Well, I ask you— [*He gives it up, and comes to Mrs Higgins*] Goodbye

MRS HIGGINS [*shaking hands*] Goodbye. Would you like to meet Miss Doolittle again?

FREDDY [*eagerly*] Yes, I should, most awfully

MRS HIGGINS Well, you know my days

FREDDY Yes Thanks awfully Goodbye [*He goes out*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL Goodbye, Mr Higgins.

HIGGINS Goodbye Goodbye

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*to Pickering*] It's no use I shall never be able to bring myself to use that word.

PICKERING Dont. It's not compulsory, you know Youll get on quite well without it.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL. Only, Clara is so down on me if I am not positively reeking with the latest slang Goodbye

PICKERING Goodbye [*They shake hands*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*to Mrs Higgins*] You mustnt mind Clara. [*Pickering, catching from her lowered tone that this is not meant for him to hear, discreetly joins Higgins at the window*] We're so poor! and she gets so few parties, poor child! She doesnt quite know. [*Mrs Higgins, seeing that her eyes are moist, takes her hand sympathetically and goes with her to the door*] But the boy is nice Dont you think so?

MRS HIGGINS Oh, quite nice I shall always be delighted to see him

MRS EYNSFORD HILL Thank you, dear Goodbye [*She goes out*]

HIGGINS [*eagerly*] Well? Is Eliza presentable? [*He swoops on his mother and drags her to the ottoman, where she sits down in Eliza's place with her son on her left*]

Pickering returns to his chair on her right

MRS HIGGINS You silly boy, of course she's not presentable She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's, but if you suppose for a moment that she doesn't give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her

PICKERING But don't you think something might be done? I mean something to eliminate the sanguinary element from her conversation.

MRS HIGGINS Not as long as she is in Henry's hands.

HIGGINS [*aggrieved*] Do you mean that my language is improper?

MRS HIGGINS No, dearest: it would be quite proper—say on a canal barge, but it would not be proper for her at a garden party

HIGGINS [*deeply injured*] Well I must say—

PICKERING [*interrupting him*] Come, Higgins you must learn to know yourself. I haven't heard such language as yours since we used to review the volunteers in Hyde Park twenty years ago.

HIGGINS [*sulkily*] Oh, well, if you say so, I suppose I don't always talk like a bishop

MRS HIGGINS [*quieting Henry with a touch*] Colonel Pickering will you tell me what is the exact state of things in Wimpole Street?

PICKERING [*cheerfully as if this completely changed the subject*] Well, I have come to live there with Henry We work together at my Indian Dialects, and we think it more convenient—

MRS HIGGINS Quite so I know all about that it's an excellent arrangement. But where does this girl live?

HIGGINS. With us, of course. Where should she live?

MRS HIGGINS But on what terms? Is she a servant? If not, what is she?

PICKERING [*slowly*] I think I know what you mean, Mrs Higgins

HIGGINS Well, dash me if I do! I've had to work at the girl every day for months to get

her to her present pitch Besides she's useful She knows where my things are, and remembers my appointments and so forth

MRS HIGGINS How does your housekeeper get on with her?

HIGGINS Mrs Pearce? Oh, she's jolly glad to get so much taken off her hands, for before Eliza came, she used to have to find things and remind me of my appointments But she's got some silly bee in her bonnet about Eliza She keeps saying "You don't think, sir". doesn't she, Pick?

PICKERING. Yes: that's the formula "You don't think, sir" That's the end of every conversation about Eliza

HIGGINS As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her confounded vowels and consonants I'm worn out, thinking about her, and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot.

MRS HIGGINS You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll

HIGGINS Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled make no mistake about that, mother But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul

PICKERING [*drawing his chair closer to Mrs Higgins and bending over to her eagerly*] Yes: it's enormously interesting I assure you, Mrs Higgins, we take Eliza very seriously Every week—every day almost—there is some new change [*Closer again*] We keep records of every stage—dozens of gramophone disks and photographs—

HIGGINS [*assailing her at the other ear*] Yes, by George. it's the most absorbing experiment I ever tackled She regularly fills our lives up doesn't she, Pick?

PICKERING We're always talking Eliza.

HIGGINS Teaching Eliza

PICKERING Dressing Eliza

MRS HIGGINS What!

HIGGINS Inventing new Elizas

HIGGINS

PICKERING	} [<i>speaking together</i>]	You know, she has the most extraordinary quickness of ear
		I assure you, my dear Mrs Higgins, that girl

HIGGINS	{	[<i>speaking together</i>]	just like a parrot	PICKERING	But what?
PICKERING			I've tried her with every	MRS HIGGINS	[<i>unconsciously dating herself by the word</i>] A problem
			is a genius She can play the piano quite beautifully	PICKERING	Oh, I see The problem of how to pass her off as a lady
HIGGINS	{		possible sort of sound that a human being can make—	HIGGINS	I'll solve that problem I've half solved it already
PICKERING			We have taken her to classical concerts and to music	MRS HIGGINS	No, you two infinitely stupid male creatures the problem of what is to be done with her afterwards
HIGGINS	{		Continental dialects, African dialects, Hottentot	HIGGINS	I don't see anything in that She can go her own way, with all the advantages I have given her
PICKERING			halls, and it's all the the same to her she plays everything	MRS HIGGINS	The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now! The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income! Is that what you mean?
HIGGINS	{		clicks, things it took me years to get hold of, and	PICKERING	[<i>indulgently, being rather bored</i>] Oh, that will be all right, Mrs Higgins [<i>He rises to go</i>]
PICKERING			she hears right off when she comes home, whether it's	HIGGINS	[<i>rising also</i>] We'll find her some light employment
HIGGINS	{		she picks them up like a shot, right away, as if she had	PICKERING	She's happy enough Don't you worry about her Goodbye [<i>He shakes hands as if he were consoling a frightened child, and makes for the door</i>]
PICKERING			Beethoven and Brahms or Lohr and Lionel Monckton,	HIGGINS	Anyhow, there's no good bothering now The thing's done Goodbye, mother [<i>He kisses her, and follows Pickering</i>]
HIGGINS	{		been at it all her life	PICKERING	[<i>turning for a final consolation</i>] There are plenty of openings We'll do what's right Goodbye
PICKERING			though six months ago, she'd never as much as touched a piano—	HIGGINS	[<i>to Pickering as they go out together</i>] Let's take her to the Shakespeare exhibition at Earl's Court

MRS HIGGINS [*putting her fingers in her ears, as they are by this time shouting one another down with an intolerable noise*] Sh-sh-sh—sh! [*They stop*]

PICKERING I beg your pardon [*He draws his chair back apologetically*]

HIGGINS Sorry When Pickering starts shouting nobody can get a word in edgeways

MRS HIGGINS Be quiet, Henry Colonel Pickering don't you realize that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING Her father did But Henry soon got rid of him

MRS HIGGINS It would have been more to the point if her mother had But as her mother didn't something else did

HIGGINS She'll mimic all the people for us when we get home

PICKERING Ripping [*Both are heard laughing as they go downstairs*]

MRS HIGGINS [*rises with an impatient bounce, and returns to her work at the writing-table She sweeps a litter of disarranged papers out of her way snatches a sheet of paper from her stationery case, and tries resolutely to write At the third line she gives it up, slings down her pen, grips the table angrily and exclaims*] Oh, men! men!! men!!!

ACT IV

The Wimpole Street laboratory Midnight Nobody in the room The clock on the mantelpiece strikes twelve The fire is not alight it is a

summer night

Presently Higgins and Pickering are heard on the stairs

HIGGINS [calling down to Pickering] I say, Pick lock up, will you? I shant be going out again

PICKERING Right Can Mrs Pearce go to bed? We dont want anything more, do we?

HIGGINS Lord, no!

Eliza opens the door and is seen on the lighted landing in opera cloak, brilliant evening dress, and diamonds, with fan, flowers, and all accessories She comes to the hearth, and switches on the electric lights there She is tired her pallor contrasts strongly with her dark eyes and hair, and her expression is almost tragic She takes off her cloak, puts her fan and flowers on the piano, and sits down on the bench, brooding and silent Higgins, in evening dress, with overcoat and hat, comes in, carrying a smoking jacket which he has picked up downstairs He takes off the hat and overcoat, throws them carelessly on the newspaper stand, disposes of his coat in the same way, puts on the smoking jacket, and throws himself wearily into the easy-chair at the hearth Pickering, similarly attired, comes in He also takes off his hat and overcoat, and is about to throw them on Higgins's when he hesitates

PICKERING I say Mrs Pearce will row if we leave these things lying about in the drawing room

HIGGINS Oh, chuck them over the banisters into the hall She'll find them there in the morning and put them away all right She'll think we were drunk

PICKERING We are, slightly Are there any letters?

HIGGINS I didnt look [Pickering takes the overcoats and hats and goes downstairs Higgins begins half singing half yawning an air from La Fanciulla del Golden West Suddenly he stops and exclaims] I wonder where the devil my slippers are!

Eliza looks at him darkly, then rises suddenly and leaves the room

Higgins yawns again, and resumes his song

Pickering returns, with the contents of the letter-box in his hand

PICKERING Only circulars, and this coroneted billet-doux for you [He throws the circulars into the fender, and posts himself on the hearth-rug, with his back to the grate].

HIGGINS [glancing at the billet-doux] Money-lender [He throws the letter after the circulars]

Eliza returns with a pair of large down-at-heel

slippers She places them on the carpet before Higgins, and sits as before without a word

HIGGINS [yawning again] Oh Lord! What an evening! What a crew! What a silly tomfoolery! [He raises his shoe to unlace it, and catches sight of the slippers He stops unlacing and looks at them as if they had appeared there of their own accord] Oh! theyre there, are they?

PICKERING [stretching himself] Well, I feel a bit tired It's been a long day The garden party, a dinner party, and the opera! Rather too much of a good thing But youve won your bet, Higgins Eliza did the trick, and something to spare, eh?

HIGGINS [fervently] Thank God it's over!

Eliza flinches violently, but they take no notice of her, and she recovers herself and sits stonily as before.

PICKERING Were you nervous at the garden party? I was Eliza didnt seem a bit nervous

HIGGINS Oh, she wasnt nervous I knew she'd be all right No it's the strain of putting the job through all these months that has told on me It was interesting enough at first, while we were at the phonetics, but after that I got deadly sick of it If I hadnt backed myself to do it I should have chucked the whole thing up two months ago It was a silly notion the whole thing has been a bore

PICKERING Oh come! the garden party was frightfully exciting My heart began beating like anything

HIGGINS Yes, for the first three minutes But when I saw we were going to win hands down, I felt like a bear in a cage, hanging about doing nothing The dinner was worse: sitting gorging there for over an hour, with nobody but a damned fool of a fashionable woman to talk to! I tell you, Pickering, never again for me No more artificial duchesses The whole thing has been simple purgatory

PICKERING Youve never been broken in properly to the social routine [Strolling over to the piano] I rather enjoy dipping into it occasionally myself. it makes me feel young again Anyhow, it was a great success: an immense success I was quite frightened once or twice because Eliza was doing it so well You see, lots of the real people cant do it at all theyre such fools that they think style comes by nature to people in their position; and so they never learn. Theres always something professional about doing a thing superlatively well

HIGGINS Yes thats what drives me mad—the silly people dont know their own silly business [*Rising*] However, it's over and done with, and now I can go to bed at last without dreading tomorrow

Eliza's beauty becomes murderous

PICKERING I think I shall turn in too Still, it's been a great occasion a triumph for you Goodnight [*He goes*]

HIGGINS [*following him*] Goodnight [*Over his shoulder, at the door*] Put out the lights, Eliza and tell Mrs Pearce not to make coffee for me in the morning I'll take tea [*He goes out*]

Eliza tries to control herself and feel indifferent as she rises and walks across to the hearth to switch off the lights By the time she gets there she is on the point of screaming She sits down in Higgins's chair and holds on hard to the arms Finally she gives way and flings herself furiously on the floor, raging

HIGGINS [*in despairing wrath outside*] What the devil have I done with my slippers? [*He appears at the door*]

LIZA [*snatching up the slippers, and hurling them at him one after the other with all her force*] There are your slippers And there Take your slippers, and may you never have a day's luck with them!

HIGGINS [*astounded*] What on earth—! [*He comes to her*] Whats the matter? Get up [*He pulls her up*] Anything wrong?

LIZA [*breathless*] Nothing wrong—with you I've won your bet for you, havnt I? Thats enough for you I dont matter, I suppose

HIGGINS You won my bet! You! Presumptuous insect! I won it. What did you throw those slippers at me for?

LIZA Because I wanted to smash your face. I'd like to kill you, you selfish brute Why didnt you leave me where you picked me out of—in the gutter? You thank God it's all over, and that now you can throw me back again there, do you? [*She crimps her fingers frantically*]

HIGGINS [*looking at her in cool wonder*] The creature is nervous, after all

LIZA [*gives a suffocated scream of fury, and instinctively darts her nails at his face*]!

HIGGINS [*catching her wrists*] Ah! would you? Claws in, you cat How dare you shew your temper to me? Sit down and be quiet [*He throws her roughly into the easy-chair*]

LIZA [*crushed by superior strength and weight*] Whats to become of me? Whats to become

of me?

HIGGINS How the devil do I know whats to become of you? What does it matter what becomes of you?

LIZA You dont care I know you dont care You wouldnt care if I was dead I'm nothing to you—not so much as them slippers.

HIGGINS [*thundering*] Those slippers

LIZA [*with bitter submission*] Those slippers I didnt think it made any difference now

A pause Eliza hopeless and crushed Higgins a little uneasy

HIGGINS [*in his loftiest manner*] Why have you begun going on like this? May I ask whether you complain of your treatment here?

LIZA No

HIGGINS Has anybody behaved badly to you? Colonel Pickering? Mrs Pearce? Any of the servants?

LIZA No

HIGGINS I presume you dont pretend that I have treated you badly?

LIZA No

HIGGINS I am glad to hear it [*He moderates his tone*] Perhaps youre tired after the strain of the day Will you have a glass of champagne? [*He moves towards the door*]

LIZA No [*Recollecting her manners*] Thank you

HIGGINS [*good-humored again*] This has been coming on you for some days I suppose it was natural for you to be anxious about the garden party But thats all over now [*He pats her kindly on the shoulder She writhes*] Theres nothing more to worry about

LIZA No Nothing more for you to worry about [*She suddenly rises and gets away from him by going to the piano bench, where she sits and hides her face*] Oh God! I wish I was dead

HIGGINS [*staring after her in sincere surprise*] Why? In heaven's name, why? [*Reasonably, going to her*] Listen to me, Eliza All this irritation is purely subjective

LIZA I dont understand I'm too ignorant.

HIGGINS It's only imagination Low spirits and nothing else Nobody's hurting you Nothing's wrong You go to bed like a good girl and sleep it off Have a little cry and say your prayers that will make you comfortable

LIZA I heard your prayers "Thank God it's all over!"

HIGGINS [*impatiently*] Well, dont you thank

God it's all over? Now you are free and can do what you like.

LIZA [*pulling herself together in desperation*] What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? Whats to become of me?

HIGGINS [*enlightened, but not at all impressed*] Oh, thats whats worrying you, is it? [*He thrusts his hands into his pockets, and walks about in his usual manner, rattling the contents of his pockets, as if condescending to a trivial subject out of pure kindness*] I shouldnt bother about it if I were you. I should imagine you wont have much difficulty in settling yourself somewhere or other, though I hadnt quite realized that you were going away. [*She looks quickly at him. he does not look at her, but examines the dessert stand on the piano and decides that he will eat an apple*] You might marry, you know. [*He bites a large piece out of the apple and munches it noisily*] You see, Eliza, all men are not confirmed old bachelors like me and the Colonel. Most men are the marrying sort (poor devils!); and youre not bad-looking. it's quite a pleasure to look at you sometimes—not now, of course, because youre crying and looking as ugly as the very devil, but when youre all right and quite yourself, youre what I should call attractive. That is, to the people in the marrying line, you understand. You go to bed and have a good nice rest; and then get up and look at yourself in the glass; and you wont feel so cheap.

Eliza again looks at him, speechless, and does not stir.

The look is quite lost on him. he eats his apple with a dreamy expression of happiness, as it is quite a good one.

HIGGINS [*a genial afterthought occurring to him*] I daresay my mother could find some chap or other who would do very well.

LIZA We were above that at the corner of Tottenham Court Road.

HIGGINS [*waking up*] What do you mean?

LIZA. I sold flowers. I didnt sell myself. Now youve made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish youd left me where you found me.

HIGGINS [*slinging the core of the apple decisively into the grate*] Tosh, Eliza. Dont you insult human relations by dragging all this cant about buying and selling into it. You neednt marry the fellow if you dont like him.

LIZA What else am I to do?

HIGGINS. Oh, lots of things. What about your old idea of a florist's shop? Pickering could set you up in one. he's lots of money. [*Chuckling*] He'll have to pay for all those togs you have been wearing today, and that, with the hire of the jewellery, will make a big hole in two hundred pounds. Why, six months ago you would have thought it the millennium to have a flower shop of your own. Come! youll be all right. I must clear off to bed. I'm devilish sleepy. By the way, I came down for something. I forget what it was.

LIZA Your slippers.

HIGGINS Oh yes, of course. You shied them at me. [*He picks them up, and is going out when she rises and speaks to him*]

LIZA Before you go, sir—

HIGGINS [*dropping the slippers in his surprise at her calling him Sir*] Eh?

LIZA Do my clothes belong to me or to Colonel Pickering?

HIGGINS [*coming back into the room as if her question were the very climax of unreason*] What the devil use would they be to Pickering?

LIZA He might want them for the next girl you pick up to experiment on.

HIGGINS [*shocked and hurt*] Is that the way you feel towards us?

LIZA I dont want to hear anything more about that. All I want to know is whether anything belongs to me. My own clothes were burnt.

HIGGINS But what does it matter? Why need you start bothering about that in the middle of the night?

LIZA I want to know what I may take away with me. I dont want to be accused of stealing.

HIGGINS [*now deeply wounded*] Stealing! You shouldnt have said that, Eliza. That shews a want of feeling.

LIZA I'm sorry. I'm only a common ignorant girl, and in my station I have to be careful. There cant be any feelings between the like of you and the like of me. Please will you tell me what belongs to me and what doesnt?

HIGGINS [*very sulky*] You may take the whole damned houseful if you like. Except the jewels. Theyre hired. Will that satisfy you? [*He turns on his heel and is about to go in extreme dudgeon*]

LIZA [*drinking in his emotion like nectar, and nagging him to provoke a further supply*] Stop, please. [*She takes off her jewels*]. Will you take these to your room and keep them safe? I

don't want to run the risk of their being missing

HIGGINS [*furious*] Hand them over [*She puts them into his hands*] If these belonged to me instead of to the jeweller, I'd ram them down your ungrateful throat [*He perfunctorily thrusts them into his pockets, unconsciously decorating himself with the protruding ends of the chains*]

LIZA [*taking a ring off*] This ring isn't the jeweller's it's the one you bought me in Brighton I don't want it now [*Higgins dashes the ring violently into the fireplace, and turns on her so threateningly that she crouches over the piano with her hands over her face, and exclaims*] Don't you hit me

HIGGINS Hit you! You infamous creature, how dare you accuse me of such a thing? It is you who have hit me You have wounded me to the heart.

LIZA [*thrilling with hidden joy*] I'm glad I've got a little of my own back, anyhow

HIGGINS [*with dignity, in his finest professional style*] You have caused me to lose my temper a thing that has hardly ever happened to me before I prefer to say nothing more tonight I am going to bed

LIZA [*pertly*] You'd better leave a note for Mrs Pearce about the coffee, for she won't be told by me

HIGGINS [*formally*] Damn Mrs Pearce, and damn the coffee, and damn you, and damn my own folly in having lavished hard-earned knowledge and the treasure of my regard and intimacy on a heartless guttersnipe [*He goes out with impressive decorum, and spoils it by slamming the door savagely*]

Eliza smiles for the first time, expresses her feelings by a wild pantomime in which an imitation of Higgins's exit is confused with her own triumph, and finally goes down on her knees on the hearthrug to look for the ring

ACT V

Mrs Higgins's drawing room. She is at her writing-table as before. The parlor-maid comes in

THE PARLOR-MAID [*at the door*] Mr Henry, ma'am, is downstairs with Colonel Pickering

MRS HIGGINS Well, shew them up

THE PARLOR-MAID They're using the telephone, ma'am Telephoning to the police, I think

MRS HIGGINS What!

THE PARLOR-MAID [*coming further in and lowering her voice*] Mr Henry is in a state, ma'am I thought I'd better tell you

MRS HIGGINS If you had told me that Mr Henry was not in a state it would have been more surprising Tell them to come up when they've finished with the police I suppose he's lost something

THE PARLOR-MAID Yes, ma'am [*going*]

MRS HIGGINS Go upstairs and tell Miss Doolittle that Mr Henry and the Colonel are here Ask her not to come down till I send for her

THE PARLOR-MAID Yes, ma'am

Higgins bursts in. He is, as the parlor-maid has said, in a state

HIGGINS Look here, mother here's a confounded thing!

MRS HIGGINS Yes, dear Good morning [*He checks his impatience and kisses her, whilst the parlor-maid goes out*] What is it?

HIGGINS Eliza's bolted

MRS HIGGINS [*calmly continuing her writing*] You must have frightened her

HIGGINS Frightened her! nonsense! She was left last night, as usual, to turn out the lights and all that, and instead of going to bed she changed her clothes and went right off her bed wasn't slept in She came in a cab for her things before seven this morning, and that fool Mrs Pearce let her have them without telling me a word about it What am I to do?

MRS HIGGINS Do without, I'm afraid, Henry The girl has a perfect right to leave if she chooses

HIGGINS [*wandering distractedly across the room*] But I can't find anything I don't know what appointments I've got I'm— [*Pickering comes in. Mrs Higgins puts down her pen and turns away from the writing-table*]

PICKERING [*shaking hands*] Good morning, Mrs Higgins Has Henry told you? [*He sits down on the ottoman*]

HIGGINS What does that ass of an inspector say? Have you offered a reward?

MRS HIGGINS [*rising in indignant amazement*] You don't mean to say you have set the police after Eliza

HIGGINS Of course What are the police for? What else could we do? [*He sits in the Elizabethan chair*]

PICKERING The inspector made a lot of difficulties I really think he suspected us of some improper purpose

MRS HIGGINS Well, of course he did What right have you to go to the police and give the girl's name as if she were a thief, or a lost umbrella, or something? Really! [*She sits down again, deeply vexed*]

HIGGINS But we want to find her

PICKERING We cant let her go like this, you know, Mrs Higgins What were we to do?

MRS HIGGINS You have no more sense, either of you, than two children Why—

The parlor-maid comes in and breaks off the conversation

THE PARLOR-MAID Mr Henry a gentleman wants to see you very particular He's been sent on from Wimpole Street

HIGGINS Oh, bother! I cant see anyone now Who is it?

THE PARLOR-MAID A Mr Doolittle, sir

PICKERING Doolittle! Do you mean the dustman?

THE PARLOR-MAID Dustman! Oh no, sir a gentleman

HIGGINS [*springing up excitedly*] By George, Pick, it's some relative of hers that she's gone to Somebody we know nothing about [*To the parlor-maid*] Send him up, quick.

THE PARLOR-MAID Yes, sir [*She goes*]

HIGGINS [*eagerly, going to his mother*] Genteel relatives! now we shall hear something. [*He sits down in the Chippendale chair*]

MRS HIGGINS Do you know any of her people?

PICKERING Only her father. the fellow we told you about

THE PARLOR-MAID [*announcing*] Mr Doolittle [*She withdraws*]

Doolittle enters He is brilliantly dressed in a new fashionable frock-coat, with white waistcoat and grey trousers A flower in his buttonhole, a dazzling silk hat, and patent leather shoes complete the effect He is too concerned with the business he has come on to notice Mrs Higgins He walks straight to Higgins, and accosts him with vehement reproach

DOOLITTLE [*indicating his own person*] See here! Do you see this? You done this

HIGGINS Done what, man?

DOOLITTLE This, I tell you Look at it Look at this hat Look at this coat

PICKERING. Has Elza been buying you clothes?

DOOLITTLE Elza! not she Not half Why would she buy me clothes?

MRS HIGGINS Good morning, Mr Doolittle

Wont you sit down?

DOOLITTLE [*taken aback as he becomes conscious that he has forgotten his hostess*] Asking your pardon, maam [*He approaches her and shakes her proffered hand*] Thank you [*He sits down on the ottoman, on Pickering's right*] I am that full of what has happened to me that I cant think of anything else.

HIGGINS What the dickens has happened to you?

DOOLITTLE I shouldnt mind if it had only happened to me anything might happen to anybody and nobody to blame but Providence, as you might say But this is something that you done to me yes, you, Henry Higgins

HIGGINS Have you found Eliza? Thats the point

DOOLITTLE Have you lost her?

HIGGINS Yes

DOOLITTLE You have all the luck, you have I aint found her, but she'll find me quick enough now after what you done to me

MRS HIGGINS But what has my son done to you, Mr Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE Done to me! Ruined me Destroyed my happiness Tied me up and delivered me into the hands of middle class morality

HIGGINS [*rising intolerantly and standing over Doolittle*] Youre raving Youre drunk. Youre mad I gave you five pounds After that I had two conversations with you, at half-a-crown an hour Ive never seen you since.

DOOLITTLE Oh! Drunk! am I? Mad! am I? Tell me this Did you or did you not write a letter to an old blighter in America that was giving five millions to found Moral Reform Societies all over the world, and that wanted you to invent a universal language for him?

HIGGINS What! Ezra D Wannafeller! He's dead [*He sits down again carelessly*]

DOOLITTLE. Yes he's dead; and I'm done for Now did you or did you not write a letter to him to say that the most original moralist at present in England, to the best of your knowledge, was Alfred Doolittle, a common dustman

HIGGINS. Oh, after your last visit I remember making some silly joke of the kind.

DOOLITTLE Ah! you may well call it a silly joke It put the lid on me right enough Just give him the chance he wanted to shew that Americans is not like us that they recognize and respect merit in every class of life, how-

ever humble Them words is in his blooming will, in which, Henry Higgins, thanks to your silly joking, he leaves me a share in his Pre-digested Cheese Trust worth three thousand a year on condition that I lecture for his Wannafeller Moral Reform World League as often as they ask me up to six times a year

HIGGINS The devil he does! Whew! *[Brightening suddenly]* What a lark!

PICKERING A safe thing for you, Doolittle They wont ask you twice

DOOLITTLE. It aint the lecturing I mind I'll lecture them blue in the face, I will, and not turn a hair It's making a gentleman of me that I object to Who asked him to make a gentleman of me? I was happy I was free I touched pretty nigh everybody for money when I wanted it, same as I touched you, Henry Higgins *[Now I am worried, tied neck and heels, and everybody touches me for money]* It's a fine thing for you, says my solicitor Is it? says I You mean it's a good thing for you, I says When I was a poor man and had a solicitor once when they found a pram in the dust cart, he got me off, and got shut of me and got me shut of him as quick as he could Same with the doctors used to shove me out of the hospital before I could hardly stand on my legs, and nothing to pay Now they finds out that I'm not a healthy man and cant live unless they looks after me twice a day In the house I'm not let do a hand's turn for myself somebody else must do it and touch me for it. A year ago I hadnt a relative in the world except two or three that wouldnt speak to me Now Ive fifty, and not a decent week's wages among the lot of them I have to live for others and not for myself thats middle class morality You talk of losing Eliza. Dont you be anxious I bet she's on my doorstep by this she that could support herself easy by selling flowers if I wasnt respectable And the next one to touch me will be you, Henry Higgins I'll have to learn to speak middle class language from you, instead of speaking proper English Thats where you'll come in, and I dare-say thats what you done it for

MRS HIGGINS But, my dear Mr Doolittle, you need not suffer all this if you are really in earnest Nobody can force you to accept this bequest You can repudiate it Isnt that so, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING I believe so

DOOLITTLE *[softening his manner in deference to her sex]* Thats the tragedy of it, maam It's easy to say chuck it, but I havnt the nerve Which of us has? We're all intimidated Intimidated, maam thats what we are What is there for me if I chuck it but the workhouse in my old age? I have to dye my hair already to keep my job as a dustman If I was one of the deserving poor, and had put by a bit, I could chuck it, but then why should I, acause the deserving poor might as well be million-aires for all the happiness they ever has. They dont know what happiness is But I, as one of the undeserving poor, have nothing between me and the pauper's uniform but this here blasted three thousand a year that shoves me into the middle class *[Excuse the expression maam youd use it yourself if you had my provocation]* Theyve got you every way you turn it's a choice between the Skilly of the workhouse and the Char Bydis of the middle class, and I havnt the nerve for the workhouse Intimidated thats what I am Broke Bought up Happier men than me will call for my dust, and touch me for their tip, and I'll look on helpless, and envy them And thats what your son has brought me to *[He is overcome by emotion]*

MRS HIGGINS Well, I'm very glad youre not going to do anything foolish, Mr Doolittle For this solves the problem of Eliza's future You can provide for her now

DOOLITTLE *[with melancholy resignation]* Yes, maam I'm expected to provide for everyone now, out of three thousand a year

HIGGINS *[jumping up]* Nonsense! he cant provide for her He shant provide for her She doesnt belong to him I paid him five pounds for her Doolittle either youre an honest man or a rogue

DOOLITTLE *[tolerantly]* A little of both, Henry, like the rest of us a little of both

HIGGINS Well, you took that money for the girl and you have no right to take her as well

MRS HIGGINS Henry dont be absurd If you want to know where Eliza is, she is upstairs

HIGGINS *[amazed]* Upstairs!!! Then I shall jolly soon fetch her downstairs *[He makes resolutely for the door]*

MRS HIGGINS *[rising and following him]* Be quiet, Henry Sit down

HIGGINS I—

MRS HIGGINS Sit down, dear, and listen to me

HIGGINS Oh very well, very well, very well [*He throws himself ungraciously on the ottoman, with his face towards the windows*] But I think you might have told us this half an hour ago

MRS HIGGINS Eliza came to me this morning She passed the night partly walking about in a rage, partly trying to throw herself into the river and being afraid to, and partly in the Carlton Hotel She told me of the brutal way you two treated her

HIGGINS [*bounding up again*] What!

PICKERING [*rising also*] My dear Mrs Higgins, she's been telling you stories We didn't treat her brutally We hardly said a word to her, and we parted on particularly good terms [*Turning on Higgins*] Higgins did you bully her after I went to bed?

HIGGINS Just the other way about She threw my slippers in my face She behaved in the most outrageous way I never gave her the slightest provocation The slippers came bang into my face the moment I entered the room—before I had uttered a word And used perfectly awful language.

PICKERING [*astonished*] But why? What did we do to her?

MRS HIGGINS I think I know pretty well what you did The girl is naturally rather affectionate, I think Isn't she, Mr Doolittle?

DOOLITTLE Very tender-hearted, ma'am Takes after me

MRS HIGGINS Just so She had become attached to you both She worked very hard for you, Henry! I don't think you quite realize what anything in the nature of brain work means to a girl like that Well, it seems that when the great day of trial came and she did this wonderful thing for you without making a single mistake, you two sat there and never said a word to her, but talked together of how glad you were that it was all over and how you had been bored with the whole thing And then you were surprised because she threw your slippers at you! I should have thrown the fire-irons at you

HIGGINS We said nothing except that we were tired and wanted to go to bed Did we, Pick?

PICKERING [*shrugging his shoulders*] That was all

MRS HIGGINS [*ironically*] Quite sure?

PICKERING Absolutely Really, that was all

MRS HIGGINS You didn't thank her, or pet

her, or admire her, or tell her how splendid she'd been

HIGGINS [*impatiently*] But she knew all about that We didn't make speeches to her, if that's what you mean

PICKERING [*conscience stricken*] Perhaps we were a little inconsiderate. Is she very angry?

MRS HIGGINS [*returning to her place at the writing-table*] Well, I'm afraid she won't go back to Wimpole Street, especially now that Mr Doolittle is able to keep up the position you have thrust on her, but she says she is quite willing to meet you on friendly terms and to let bygones be bygones

HIGGINS [*furious*] Is she, by George? Hol

MRS HIGGINS If you promise to behave yourself, Henry, I'll ask her to come down If not, go home, for you have taken up quite enough of my time

HIGGINS. Oh, all right Very well Pick— you behave yourself. Let us put on our best Sunday manners for this creature that we picked out of the mud [*He flings himself sulkily into the Elizabethan chair*]

DOOLITTLE [*remonstrating*] Now, now, Henry Higgins! have some consideration for my feelings as a middle class man

MRS HIGGINS Remember your promise, Henry [*She presses the bell-button on the writing-table*] Mr Doolittle will you be so good as to step out on the balcony for a moment I don't want Eliza to have the shock of your news until she has made it up with these two gentlemen. Would you mind?

DOOLITTLE As you wish, lady. Anything to help Henry to keep her off my hands [*He disappears through the window*]

The parlor-maid answers the bell Pickering sits down in Doolittle's place

MRS HIGGINS Ask Miss Doolittle to come down, please

THE PARLOR-MAID Yes, ma'am [*She goes out*].

MRS HIGGINS. Now, Henry be good

HIGGINS I am behaving myself perfectly

PICKERING He is doing his best, Mrs Higgins

A pause Higgins throws back his head; stretches out his legs, and begins to whistle

MRS HIGGINS. Henry, dearest, you don't look at all nice in that attitude.

HIGGINS [*pulling himself together*] I was not trying to look nice, mother

MRS HIGGINS It doesn't matter, dear I only wanted to make you speak

HIGGINS Why?

MRS HIGGINS Because you cant speak and whistle at the same time

Higgins groans *Another very trying pause*
HIGGINS [*springing up, out of patience*] Where the devil is that girl? Are we to wait here all day?

Eliza enters, sunny, self-possessed, and giving a staggeringly convincing exhibition of ease of manner. She carries a little workbasket, and is very much at home. Pickering is too much taken aback to rise

LIZA. How do you do, Professor Higgins? Are you quite well?

HIGGINS [*choking*] Am I— [*He can no more*]

LIZA But of course you are; you are never ill. So glad to see you again, Colonel Pickering. [*He rises hastily, and they shake hands*] Quite chilly this morning, isnt it? [*She sits down on his left. He sits beside her*]

HIGGINS Dont you dare try this game on me. I taught it to you, and it doesnt take me in. Get up and come home, and dont be a fool.

Eliza takes a piece of needlework from her basket, and begins to stitch at it, without taking the least notice of this outburst

MRS HIGGINS Very nicely put, indeed, Henry. No woman could resist such an invitation.

HIGGINS You let her alone, mother. Let her speak for herself. You will jolly soon see whether she has an idea that I havnt put into her head or a word that I havnt put into her mouth. I tell you I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden, and now she pretends to play the fine lady with me.

MRS HIGGINS [*placidly*] Yes, dear, but youll sit down, wont you?

Higgins sits down again, savagely

LIZA [*to Pickering, taking no apparent notice of Higgins, and working away deftly*] Will you drop me altogether now that the experiment is over, Colonel Pickering?

PICKERING Oh dont. You mustnt think of it as an experiment. It shocks me, somehow.

LIZA Oh, I'm only a squashed cabbage leaf—

PICKERING [*impulsively*] No.

LIZA [*continuing quietly*] —but I owe so much to you that I should be very unhappy if you forgot me.

PICKERING Its very kind of you to say so, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA Its not because you paid for my dresses. I know you are generous to every-

body with money. But it was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes one a lady, isnt it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentlemen didnt behave like that if you hadnt been there.

HIGGINS Well!!

PICKERING Oh, thats only his way, you know. He doesnt mean it.

LIZA Oh, I didnt mean it either, when I was a flower girl. It was only my way. But you see I did it, and thats what makes the difference after all.

PICKERING No doubt. Still, he taught you to speak, and I couldnt have done that, you know.

LIZA [*trivially*] Of course that is his profession.

HIGGINS Damnation!

LIZA [*continuing*] It was just like learning to dance in the fashionable way: there was nothing more than that in it. But do you know what began my real education?

PICKERING What?

LIZA [*stopping her work for a moment*] Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me. [*She resumes her stitching*] And there were a hundred little things you never noticed, because they came naturally to you. Things about standing up and taking off your hat and opening doors—

PICKERING Oh, that was nothing.

LIZA Yes, things that shewed you thought and felt about me as if I were something better than a scullery-maid, though of course I know you would have been just the same to a scullery-maid if she had been let into the drawing room. You never took off your boots in the dining room when I was there.

PICKERING You mustnt mind that. Higgins takes off his boots all over the place.

LIZA I know. I am not blaming him. It is his way, isnt it? But it made such a difference to me that you didnt do it. You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always

be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will, but I know I can be a lady to you because you always treat me as a lady, and always will

MRS HIGGINS Please dont grind your teeth, Henry

PICKERING Well, this is really very nice of you, Miss Doolittle

LIZA I should like you to call me Eliza, now, if you would

PICKERING Thank you Eliza, of course

LIZA And I should like Professor Higgins to call me Miss Doolittle

HIGGINS I'll see you damned first

MRS HIGGINS Henry! Henry!

PICKERING [*laughing*] Why dont you slang back at him? Dont stand it It would do him a lot of good

LIZA I cant I could have done it once; but now I cant go back to it Last night, when I was wandering about, a girl spoke to me, and I tried to get back into the old way with her, but it was no use You told me, you know, that when a child is brought to a foreign country, it picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own Well, I am a child in your country I have forgotten my own language, and can speak nothing but yours Thats the real break-off with the corner of Tottenham Court Road Leaving Wimpole Street finishes it

PICKERING [*much alarmed*] Oh! but youre coming back to Wimpole Street, arnt you? Youll forgive Higgins?

HIGGINS [*rising*] Forgive! Will she, by George! Let her go Let her find out how she can get on without us She will relapse into the gutter in three weeks without me at her elbow

Doolittle appears at the centre window. With a look of dignified reproach at Higgins, he comes slowly and silently to his daughter, who, with her back to the window, is unconscious of his approach

PICKERING He's incorrigible, Eliza You wont relapse, will you?

LIZA No not now Never again I have learnt my lesson I dont believe I could utter one of the old sounds if I tried [*Doolittle touches her on her left shoulder She drops her work, losing her self-possession utterly at the spectacle of her father's splendor*] A-a-a-a-ah-ow-oooh!

HIGGINS [*with a crow of triumph*] Aha! Just

so A-a-a-a-ahowoooh! A-a-a-a-ahowoooh! A-a-a-a-ahowoooh! Victory! Victory! [*He throws himself on the divan, folding his arms, and spraddling arrogantly*]

DOOLITTLE Can you blame the girl? Dont look at me like that, Eliza It aint my fault Ive come into some money

LIZA You must have touched a millionai'e this time, dad

DOOLITTLE I have. But I'm dressed something special today I'm going to St George's, Hanover Square Your stepmother is going to marry me

LIZA [*angrily*] Youre going to let yourself down to marry that low common woman!

PICKERING [*quietly*] He ought to, Eliza [*To Doolittle*] Why has she changed her mind?

DOOLITTLE [*sadly*] Intimidated, Governor. Intimidated Middle class morality claims its victim Wont you put on your hat, Liza, and come and see me turned off?

LIZA If the Colonel says I must, I—I'll [*almost sobbing*—I'll demean myself. And get insulted for my pains, like enough.

DOOLITTLE Dont be afraid she never comes to words with anyone now, poor woman! respectability has broke all the spirit out of her

PICKERING [*squeezing Eliza's elbow gently*] Be kind to them, Eliza Make the best of it

LIZA [*forcing a little smile for him through her vexation*] Oh well, just to shew theres no ill feeling I'll be back in a moment [*She goes out*]

DOOLITTLE [*sitting down beside Pickering*] I feel uncommon nervous about the ceremony, Colonel I wish youd come and see me through it

PICKERING But youve been through it before, man You were married to Eliza's smother.

DOOLITTLE. Who told you that, Colonel?

PICKERING Well, nobody told me But I concluded—naturally—

DOOLITTLE No that aint the natural way, Colonel it's only the middle class way My way was always the undeserving way. But dont say nothing to Eliza She dont know I always had a delicacy about telling her.

PICKERING Quite right We'll leave it so, if you dont mind

DOOLITTLE And youll come to the church, Colonel, and put me through straight?

PICKERING With pleasure. As far as a bachelor can

MRS HIGGINS May I come, Mr Doolittle? I should be very sorry to miss your wedding

DOOLITTLE. I should indeed be honored by

your condescension, maam, and my poor old woman would take it as a tremendous compliment. She's been very low, thinking of the happy days that are no more.

MRS HIGGINS [*rising*] I'll order the carriage and get ready. [*The men rise, except Higgins*] I shant be more than fifteen minutes. [*As she goes to the door Eliza comes in, halted and buttoning her gloves*] I'm going to the church to see your father married, Eliza. You had better come in the brougham with me. Colonel Pickering can go on with the bridegroom.

Mrs Higgins goes out. Eliza comes to the middle of the room between the centre window and the ottoman. Pickering joins her.

DOOLITTLE Bridegroom! What a word! It makes a man realize his position, somehow. [*He takes up his hat and goes towards the door*]

PICKERING Before I go, Eliza, do forgive him and come back to us.

LIZA I dont think papa would allow me. Would you, dad?

DOOLITTLE [*sad but magnanimous*] They played you off very cunning, Eliza, them two sportsmen. If it had been only one of them, you could have nailed him. But you see, there was two, and one of them chaperooned the other, as you might say. [*To Pickering*] It was artful of you, Colonel, but I bear no malice. I should have done the same myself. I been the victim of one woman after another all my life, and I dont grudge you two getting the better of Eliza. I shant interfere. It's time for us to go, Colonel. So long, Henry. See you in St George's, Eliza. [*He goes out*]

PICKERING [*coaxing*] Do stay with us, Eliza. [*He follows Doolittle*]

Eliza goes out on the balcony to avoid being alone with Higgins. He rises and joins her there. She immediately comes back into the room and makes for the door, but he goes along the balcony quickly and gets his back to the door before she reaches it.

HIGGINS Well, Eliza, youve had a bit of your own back, as you call it. Have you had enough? and are you going to be reasonable? Or do you want any more?

LIZA You want me back only to pick up your slippers and put up with your tempers and fetch and carry for you.

HIGGINS I havnt said I wanted you back at all.

LIZA Oh, indeed. Then what are we talking about?

HIGGINS About you, not about me. If you come back I shall treat you just as I have always treated you. I cant change my nature, and I dont intend to change my manners. My manners are exactly the same as Colonel Pickering's.

LIZA Thats not true. He treats a flower girl as if she was a duchess.

HIGGINS And I treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl.

LIZA I see. [*She turns away composedly, and sits on the ottoman, facing the window*] The same to everybody.

HIGGINS Just so.

LIZA Like father.

HIGGINS [*grinning, a little taken down*] Without accepting the comparison at all points, Eliza, it's quite true that your father is not a snob, and that he will be quite at home in any station of life to which his eccentric destiny may call him. [*Seriously*] The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls. In short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another.

LIZA Amen. You are a born preacher.

HIGGINS [*irritated*] The question is not whether I treat you rudely, but whether you ever heard me treat anyone else better.

LIZA [*with sudden sincerity*] I dont care how you treat me. I dont mind your swearing at me. I dont mind a black eye. Ive had one before this. But [*standing up and facing him*] I wont be passed over.

HIGGINS Then get out of my way, for I wont stop for you. You talk about me as if I were a motor bus.

LIZA So you are a motor bus. All bounce and go, and no consideration for anyone. But I can do without you. Dont think I cant.

HIGGINS I know you can. I told you you could.

LIZA [*wounded, getting away from him to the other side of the ottoman with her face to the hearth*] I know you did, you brute. You wanted to get rid of me.

HIGGINS Liar.

LIZA Thank you. [*She sits down with dignity*]

HIGGINS You never asked yourself, I suppose, whether I could do without you.

LIZA [*earnestly*] Dont you try to get round me. Youll have to do without me.

HIGGINS [*arrogant*] I can do without anybody I have my own soul my own spark of divine fire But [*with sudden humility*] I shall miss you, Eliza [*He sits down near her on the ottoman*]. I have learnt something from your idiotic notions. I confess that humbly and gratefully And I have grown accustomed to your voice and appearance I like them, rather

LIZA Well, you have both of them on your gramophone and in your book of photographs When you feel lonely without me, you can turn the machine on It's got no feelings to hurt.

HIGGINS. I cant turn your soul on. Leave me those feelings, and you can take away the voice and the face They are not you

LIZA Oh, you are a devil You can twist the heart in a girl as easy as some could twist her arms to hurt her Mrs Pearce warned me Time and again she has wanted to leave you, and you always got round her at the last minute And you dont care a bit for her And you dont care a bit for me.

HIGGINS I care for life, for humanity; and you are a part of it that has come my way and been built into my house What more can you or anyone ask?

LIZA I wont care for anybody that doesnt care for me

HIGGINS Commercial principles, Eliza Like [*reproducing her Covent Garden pronunciation with professional exactness*] s'yollin voylets [*selling violets*], isnt it?

LIZA Dont sneer at me, It's mean to sneer at me.

HIGGINS I have never sneered in my life Sneering doesnt become either the human face or the human soul I am expressing my righteous contempt for Commercialism I dont and wont trade in affection You call me a brute because you couldnt buy a claim on me by fetching my slippers and finding my spectacles You were a fool I think a woman fetching a man's slippers is a disgusting sight: did I ever fetch your slippers? I think a good deal more of you for throwing them in my face No use slaving for me and then saying you want to be cared for: who cares for a slave? If you come back, come back for the sake of good fellowship; for youll get nothing else Youve had a thousand times as much out of me as I have out of you; and if you dare to set up your little dog's tricks of fetching and carrying slippers

against my creation of a Duchess Eliza, I'll slam the door in your silly face

LIZA What did you do it for if you didnt care for me?

HIGGINS [*heartily*] Why, because it was my job

LIZA. You never thought of the trouble it would make for me

HIGGINS Would the world ever have been made if its maker had been afraid of making trouble? Making life means making trouble Theres only one way of escaping trouble, and thats killing things Cowards, you notice, are always shrieking to have troublesome people killed.

LIZA I'm no preacher I dont notice things like that I notice that you dont notice me

HIGGINS [*jumping up and walking about intolerantly*] Eliza youre an idiot. I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring twopence what happens to either of us I am not intimidated, like your father and your stepmother. So you can come back or go to the devil which you please

LIZA What am I to come back for?

HIGGINS [*bouncing up on his knees on the ottoman and leaning over it to her*] For the fun of it Thats why I took you on

LIZA [*with averted face*] And you may throw me out tomorrow if I dont do everything you want me to?

HIGGINS Yes, and you may walk out tomorrow if I dont do everything you want me to

LIZA And live with my stepmother?

HIGGINS Yes, or sell flowers

LIZA Oh! if I only could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I'm a slave now, for all my fine clothes

HIGGINS Not a bit I'll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like Or would you rather marry Pickering?

LIZA [*looking fiercely round at him*] I wouldnt marry you if you asked me, and youre nearer my age than what he is.

HIGGINS [*gently*] Than he is not "than what he is"

LIZA [*losing her temper and rising*] I'll talk as I like. Youre not my teacher now.

HIGGINS [*reflectively*] I dont suppose Picker-

LIZA [*rising determinedly*] I'll let you see whether I'm dependent on you. If you can preach, I can teach. I'll go and be a teacher.

HIGGINS What'll you teach, in heaven's name?

LIZA What you taught me. I'll teach phonetics.

HIGGINS Ha! ha! ha!

LIZA I'll offer myself as an assistant to Professor Nepean.

HIGGINS [*rising in a fury*] What! That impostor! that humbug! that toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! my discoveries! You take one step in his direction and I'll wring your neck. [*He lays hands on her*] Do you hear?

LIZA [*defiantly non-resistant*] Wring away. What do I care? I knew you'd strike me some day. [*He lets her go, stamping with rage at having forgotten himself, and recoils so hastily that he stumbles back into his seat on the ottoman*] Aha! Now I know how to deal with you. What a fool I was not to think of it before! You can't take away the knowledge you gave me. You said I had a finer ear than you. And I can be civil and kind to people, which is more than you can. Aha! That's done you, Henry Higgins, it has. Now I don't care that [*snapping her fingers*] for your bullying and your big talk. I'll advertize it in the papers that your duchess is only a flower girl that you taught, and that she'll teach anybody to be a duchess just the same in six months for a thousand guineas. Oh, when I think of myself crawling under your feet and being trampled on and called names, when all the time I had only to lift up my finger to be as good as you, I could just kick myself.

HIGGINS [*wondering at her*] You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than snivelling, better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isn't it? [*Rising*] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this.

LIZA Yes, you turn round and make up to me now that I'm not afraid of you, and can do without you.

HIGGINS Of course I do, you little fool. Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength, a consort battleship. You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors together instead of only two men and a silly girl.

Mrs Higgins returns, dressed for the wedding

Eliza instantly becomes cool and elegant

MRS HIGGINS The carriage is waiting, Eliza. Are you ready?

LIZA Quite. Is the Professor coming?

MRS HIGGINS Certainly not. He can't be. He has himself in church. He makes remarks out loud all the time on the clergyman's pronunciation.

LIZA Then I shall not see you again, Professor. Goodbye. [*She goes to the door*]

MRS HIGGINS [*coming to Higgins*] Goodbye, dear.

HIGGINS Goodbye, mother. [*He is about to kiss her, when he recollects something*] Oh, by the way, Eliza, order a ham and a Stilton cheese, will you? And buy me a pair of reindeer gloves, number eights, and a tie to match that new suit of mine, at Eale & Binman's. You can choose the color. [*His cheerful, careless, vigorous voice shews that he is incorrigible*]

LIZA [*disdainfully*] Buy them yourself. [*She sweeps out*]

MRS HIGGINS I'm afraid you've spoiled that girl, Henry. But never mind, dear. I'll buy you the tie and gloves.

HIGGINS [*sunmily*] Oh, don't bother. She'll buy 'em all right enough. Goodbye.

They kiss, Mrs Higgins runs out. Higgins, left alone, rattles his cash in his pocket, chuckles, and disports himself in a highly self-satisfied manner.

* * * * *

The rest of the story need not be shewn in action, and indeed, would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of "happy endings" to misfit all stories. Now, the history of Eliza Doolittle, though called a romance because the transfiguration it records seems exceedingly improbable, is common enough. Such transfigurations have been achieved by hundreds of resolutely ambitious young women since Nell Gwynne set them the example by playing queens and fascinating kings in the theatre in which she began by selling oranges. Nevertheless, people in all directions have assumed, for no other reason than that she became the heroine of a romance, that she must have married the hero of it. This is unbearable, not only because her little drama, if acted on such a thoughtless assumption, must be

spoiled, but because the true sequel is patent to anyone with a sense of human nature in general, and of feminine instinct in particular.

Eliza, in telling Higgins she would not marry him if he asked her, was not coquetting she was announcing a well-considered decision. When a bachelor interests, and dominates, and teaches, and becomes important to a spinster, as Higgins with Eliza, she always, if she has character enough to be capable of it, considers very seriously indeed whether she will play for becoming that bachelor's wife, especially if he is so little interested in marriage that a determined and devoted woman might capture him if she set herself resolutely to do it. Her decision will depend a good deal on whether she is really free to choose, and that, again, will depend on her age and income. If she is at the end of her youth, and has no security for her livelihood, she will marry him because she must marry anybody who will provide for her. But at Eliza's age a good-looking girl does not feel that pressure she feels free to pick and choose. She is therefore guided by her instinct in the matter. Eliza's instinct tells her not to marry Higgins. It does not tell her to give him up. It is not in the slightest doubt as to his remaining one of the strongest personal interests in her life. It would be very sorely strained if there was another woman likely to supplant her with him. But as she feels sure of him on that last point, she has no doubt at all as to her course, and would not have any, even if the difference of twenty years in age, which seems so great to youth, did not exist between them.

As our own instincts are not appealed to by her conclusion, let us see whether we cannot discover some reason in it. When Higgins excused his indifference to young women on the ground that they had an irresistible rival in his mother he gave the clue to his inveterate old-bachelordom. The case is uncommon only to the extent that remarkable mothers are uncommon. If an imaginative boy has a sufficiently rich mother who has intelligence, personal grace, dignity of character without harshness, and a cultivated sense of the best art of her time to enable her to make her house beautiful, she sets a standard for him against which very few women can struggle, besides effecting for him a disengagement of his affections,

his sense of beauty, and his idealism from his specifically sexual impulses. This makes him a standing puzzle to the huge number of uncultivated people who have been brought up in tasteless homes by commonplace or disagreeable parents, and to whom, consequently, literature, painting, sculpture, music, and affectionate personal relations come as modes of sex if they come at all. The word passion means nothing else to them, and that Higgins could have a passion for phonetics and idealize his mother instead of Eliza, would seem to them absurd and unnatural. Nevertheless, when we look round and see that hardly anyone is too ugly or disagreeable to find a wife or a husband if he or she wants one, whilst many old maids and bachelors are above the average in quality and culture, we cannot help suspecting that the disentanglement of sex from the associations with which it is so commonly confused, a disentanglement which persons of genius achieve by sheer intellectual analysis, is sometimes produced or aided by parental fascination.

Now, though Eliza was incapable of thus explaining to herself Higgins's formidable powers of resistance to the charm that prostrated Freddy at the first glance, she was instinctively aware that she could never obtain a complete grip of him, or come between him and his mother (the first necessity of the married woman). To put it shortly, she knew that for some mysterious reason he had not the makings of a married man in him, according to her conception of a husband as one to whom she would be his nearest and fondest and warmest interest. Even had there been no mother-rival, she would still have refused to accept an interest in herself that was secondary to philosophic interests. Had Mrs Higgins died, there would still have been Milton and the Universal Alphabet. Landor's remark that to those who have the greatest power of loving, love is a secondary affair, would not have recommended Landor to Eliza. Put that along with her resentment of Higgins's domineering superiority, and her mistrust of his coaxing cleverness in getting round her and evading her wrath when he had gone too far with his impetuous bullying, and you will see that Eliza's instinct had good grounds for warning her not to marry her Pygmalion.

And now, whom did Eliza marry? For if

Higgins was a predestinate old bachelor, she was most certainly not a predestinate old maid Well, that can be told very shortly to those who have not guessed it from the indications she has herself given them

Almost immediately after Eliza is stung into proclaiming her considered determination not to marry Higgins, she mentions the fact that young Mr Frederick Eynsford Hill is pouring out his love for her daily through the post Now Freddy is young, practically twenty years younger than Higgins he is a gentleman (or, as Eliza would qualify him, a toff), and speaks like one, he is nicely dressed, is treated by the Colonel as an equal, loves her unaffectedly, and is not her master, nor ever likely to dominate her in spite of his advantage of social standing Eliza has no use for the foolish romantic tradition that all women love to be mastered, if not actually bullied and beaten "When you go to women," says Nietzsche, "take your whip with you " Sensible despots have never confined that precaution to women they have taken their whips with them when they have dealt with men, and been slavishly idealized by the men over whom they have flourished the whip much more than by women No doubt there are slavish women as well as slavish men and women, like men, admire those that are stronger than themselves But to admire a strong person and to live under that strong person's thumb are two different things The weak may not be admired and hero-worshipped, but they are by no means disliked or shunned, and they never seem to have the least difficulty in marrying people who are too good for them They may fail in emergencies, but life is not one long emergency it is mostly a string of situations for which no exceptional strength is needed, and with which even rather weak people can cope if they have a stronger partner to help them out. Accordingly, it is a truth everywhere in evidence that strong people, masculine or feminine, not only do not marry stronger people, but do not shew any preference for them in selecting their friends When a lion meets another with a louder roar "the first lion thinks the last a bore " The man or woman who feels strong enough for two, seeks for every other quality in a partner than strength

The converse is also true. Weak people want to marry strong people who do not

frighten them too much, and this often leads them to make the mistake we describe metaphorically as "biting off more than they can chew " They want too much for too little, and when the bargain is unreasonable beyond all bearing, the union becomes impossible it ends in the weaker party being either discarded or borne as a cross, which is worse People who are not only weak, but silly or obtuse as well, are often in these difficulties.

This being the state of human affairs, what is Eliza fairly sure to do when she is placed between Freddy and Higgins? Will she look forward to a lifetime of fetching Higgins's slippers or to a lifetime of Freddy fetching hers? There can be no doubt about the answer Unless Freddy is biologically repulsive to her, and Higgins biologically attractive to a degree that overwhelms all her other instincts, she will, if she marries either of them, marry Freddy

And that is just what Eliza did

Complications ensued, but they were economic, not romantic Freddy had no money and no occupation His mother's jointure, a last relic of the opulence of Large-lady Park, had enabled her to struggle along in Earls court with an air of gentility, but not to procure any serious secondary education for her children, much less give the boy a profession A clerkship at thirty shillings a week was beneath Freddy's dignity, and extremely distasteful to him besides His prospects consisted of a hope that if he kept up appearances somebody would do something for him The something appeared vaguely, to his imagination as a private secretaryship or a sinecure of some sort To his mother it perhaps appeared as a marriage to some lady of means who could not resist her boy's niceness Fancy her feelings when he married a flower girl who had become déclassée under extraordinary circumstances which were now notorious!

It is true that Eliza's situation did not seem wholly ineligible. Her father, though formerly a dustman, and now fantastically disclassed, had become extremely popular in the smartest society by a social talent which triumphed over every prejudice and every disadvantage Rejected by the middle class, which he loathed, he had shot up at once into the highest circles by his wit, his dustmanship (which he carried like a banner) and his Nietzschean transcendence of good

and evil. At intimate ducal dinners he sat on the right hand of the Duchess, and in country houses he smoked in the pantry and was made much of by the butler when he was not feeding in the dining room and being consulted by cabinet ministers. But he found it almost as hard to do all this on four thousand a year as Mrs Eynsford Hill to live in Earls court on an income so pitifully smaller than I have not the heart to disclose its exact figure. He absolutely refused to add the last straw to his burden by contributing to Eliza's support.

Thus Freddy and Eliza, now Mr and Mrs Eynsford Hill, would have spent a penniless honeymoon but for a wedding present of £500 from the Colonel to Eliza. It lasted a long time because Freddy did not know how to spend money, never having had any to spend, and Eliza, socially trained by a pair of old bachelors, wore her clothes as long as they held together and looked pretty, without the least regard to their being many months out of fashion. Still, £500 will not last two young people for ever, and they both knew, and Eliza felt as well, that they must shift for themselves in the end. She could quarter herself on Wimpole Street because it had come to be her home, but she was quite aware that she ought not to quarter Freddy there, and that it would not be good for his character if she did.

Not that the Wimpole Street bachelors objected. When she consulted them, Higgins declined to be bothered about her housing problem when that solution was so simple. Eliza's desire to have Freddy in the house with her seemed of no more importance than if she had wanted an extra piece of bedroom furniture. Pleas as to Freddy's character, and the moral obligation on him to earn his own living, were lost on Higgins. He denied that Freddy had any character, and declared that if he tried to do any useful work some competent person would have the trouble of undoing it: a procedure involving a net loss to the community, and great unhappiness to Freddy himself, who was obviously intended by Nature for such light work as amusing Eliza, which, Higgins declared, was a much more useful and honorable occupation than working in the city. When Eliza referred again to her project of teaching phonetics, Higgins abated not a jot of his violent opposition to it. He said she was

not within ten years of being qualified to meddle with his pet subject, and as it was evident that the Colonel agreed with him, she felt she could not go against them in this grave matter, and that she had no right, without Higgins's consent, to exploit the knowledge he had given her, for his knowledge seemed to her as much his private property as his watch. Eliza was no communist. Besides, she was superstitiously devoted to them both, more entirely and frankly after her marriage than before it.

It was the Colonel who finally solved the problem, which had cost him much perplexed cogitation. He one day asked Eliza, rather shyly, whether she had quite given up her notion of keeping a flower shop. She replied that she had thought of it, but had put it out of her head, because the Colonel had said, that day at Mrs Higgins's, that it would never do. The Colonel confessed that when he said that, he had not quite recovered from the dazzling impression of the day before. They broke the matter to Higgins that evening. The sole comment vouchsafed by him very nearly led to a serious quarrel with Eliza. It was to the effect that she would have in Freddy an ideal errand boy.

Freddy himself was next sounded on the subject. He said he had been thinking of a shop himself, though it had presented itself to his pennilessness as a small place in which Eliza should sell tobacco at one counter whilst he sold newspapers at the opposite one. But he agreed that it would be extraordinarily jolly to go early every morning with Eliza to Covent Garden and buy flowers on the scene of their first meeting: a sentiment which earned him many kisses from his wife. He added that he had always been afraid to propose anything of the sort, because Clara would make an awful row about a step that must damage her matrimonial chances, and his mother could not be expected to like it after clinging for so many years to that step of the social ladder on which retail trade is impossible.

This difficulty was removed by an event highly unexpected by Freddy's mother Clara, in the course of her incursions into those artistic circles which were the highest within her reach, discovered that her conversational qualifications were expected to include a grounding in the novels of Mr H. G. Wells. She borrowed them in various

directions so energetically that she swallowed them all within two months. The result was a conversion of a kind quite common today. A modern Acts of the Apostles would fill fifty whole Bibles if anyone were capable of writing it.

Poor Clara, who appeared to Higgins and his mother as a disagreeable and ridiculous person, and to her own mother as in some inexplicable way a social failure, had never seen herself in either light, for, though to some extent ridiculed and mimicked in West Kensington like everybody else there, she was accepted as a rational and normal—or shall we say inevitable?—sort of human being. At worst they called her *The Pusher*, but to them no more than to herself had it ever occurred that she was pushing the air, and pushing it in a wrong direction. Still, she was not happy. She was growing desperate. Her one asset, the fact that her mother was what the Epsom greengrocer called a carriage lady, had no exchange value, apparently. It had prevented her from getting educated, because the only education she could have afforded was education with the Earls court greengrocer's daughter. It had led her to seek the society of her mother's class; and that class simply would not have her, because she was much poorer than the greengrocer, and, far from being able to afford a maid, could not afford even a housemaid, and had to scrape along at home with an illiberally treated general servant. Under such circumstances nothing could give her an air of being a genuine product of *Large-lady Park*. And yet its tradition made her regard a marriage with anyone within her reach as an unbearable humiliation. Commercial people and professional people in a small way were odious to her. She ran after painters and novelists, but she did not charm them; and her bold attempts to pick up and practise artistic and literary talk irritated them. She was, in short, an utter failure, an ignorant, incompetent, pretentious, unwelcome, penniless, useless little snob, and though she did not admit these disqualifications (for nobody ever faces unpleasant truths of this kind until the possibility of a way out dawns on them) she felt their effects too keenly to be satisfied with her position.

Clara had a startling eyeopener when, on being suddenly awakened to enthusiasm by a girl of her own age who dazzled her and pro-

duced in her a gushing desire to take her for a model, and gain her friendship, she discovered that this exquisite apparition had graduated from the gutter in a few months time. It shook her so violently, that when Mr H. G. Wells lifted her on the point of his puissant pen, and placed her at the angle of view from which the life she was leading and the society to which she clung appeared in its true relation to real human needs and worthy social structure, he effected a conversion and a conviction of sin comparable to the most sensational feats of General Booth or Gypsy Smith. Clara's snobbery went bang. Life suddenly began to move with her. Without knowing how or why, she began to make friends and enemies. Some of the acquaintances to whom she had been a tedious or indifferent or ridiculous affliction, dropped her; others became cordial. To her amazement she found that some "quite nice" people were saturated with Wells, and that this accessibility to ideas was the secret of their niceness. People she had thought deeply religious, and had tried to conciliate on that tack with disastrous results, suddenly took an interest in her, and revealed a hostility to conventional religion which she had never conceived possible except amongst the most desperate characters. They made her read Galsworthy, and Galsworthy exposed the vanity of *Large-lady Park* and finished her. It exasperated her to think that the dungeon in which she had languished for so many unhappy years had been unlocked all the time, and that the impulses she had so carefully struggled with and stifled for the sake of keeping well with society, were precisely those by which alone she could have come into any sort of sincere human contact. In the radiance of these discoveries, and the tumult of their reaction, she made a fool of herself as freely and conspicuously as when she so rashly adopted Eliza's expletive in Mrs Higgins's drawing room; for the new-born Wellsian had to find her bearings almost as ridiculously as a baby, but nobody hates a baby for its ineptitudes, or thinks the worse of it for trying to eat the matches, and Clara lost no friends by her follies. They laughed at her to her face this time; and she had to defend herself and fight it out as best she could.

When Freddy paid a visit to Earls court (which he never did when he could possibly help it) to make the desolating announce-

ment that he and his Eliza were thinking of blackening the Largetadyscutcheon by opening a shop, he found the little household already convulsed by a prior announcement from Clara that she also was going to work in an old furniture shop in Dover Street, which had been started by a fellow Wellsian. This appointment Clara owed, after all, to her old social accomplishment of Push. She had made up her mind that, cost what it might, she would see Mr Wells in the flesh, and she had achieved her end at a garden party. She had better luck than so rash an enterprise deserved. Mr Wells came up to her expectations. Age had not withered him, nor could custom stale his infinite variety in half an hour. His pleasant neatness and compactness, his small hands and feet, his teeming ready brain, his unaffected accessibility, and a certain fine apprehensiveness which stamped him as susceptible from his topmost hair to his tipmost toe, proved irresistible. Clara talked of nothing else for weeks and weeks afterwards. And as she happened to talk to the lady of the furniture shop, and that lady also desired above all things to know Mr Wells and sell pretty things to him, she offered Clara a job on the chance of achieving that end through her.

And so it came about that Eliza's luck held, and the expected opposition to the flower shop melted away. The shop is in the arcade of a railway station not very far from the Victoria and Albert Museum, and if you live in that neighborhood you may go there any day and buy a buttonhole from Eliza.

Now here is a last opportunity for romance. Would you not like to be assured that the shop was an immense success, thanks to Eliza's charms and her early business experience in Covent Garden? Alas! the truth is the truth: the shop did not pay for a long time, simply because Eliza and her Freddy did not know how to keep it. True, Eliza had not to begin at the very beginning: she knew the names and prices of the cheaper flowers, and her elation was unbounded when she found that Freddy, like all youths educated at cheap, pretentious, and thoroughly inefficient schools, knew a little Latin. It was very little, but enough to make him appear to her a Porson or Bentley, and to put him at his ease with botanical nomenclature. Unfortunately he knew nothing else, and Eliza, though she could count money up to eighteen

shillings or so, and had acquired a certain familiarity with the language of Milton from her struggles to qualify herself for winning Higgins's bet, could not write out a bill without utterly disgracing the establishment. Freddy's power of stating in Latin that Balbus built a wall and that Gaul was divided into three parts did not carry with it the slightest knowledge of accounts or business. Colonel Pickering had to explain to him what a cheque book and a bank account meant. And the pair were by no means easily teachable. Freddy backed up Eliza in her obstinate refusal to believe that they could save money by engaging a bookkeeper with some knowledge of the business. How, they argued, could you possibly save money by going to extra expense when you already could not make both ends meet? But the Colonel, after making the ends meet over and over again, at last gently insisted, and Eliza, humbled to the dust by having to beg from him so often, and stung by the uproarious derision of Higgins, to whom the notion of Freddy succeeding at anything was a joke that never palled, grasped the fact that business, like phonetics, has to be learned.

On the piteous spectacle of the pair spending their evenings in shorthand schools and polytechnic classes, learning bookkeeping and typewriting with incipient junior clerks, male and female, from the elementary schools, let me not dwell. There were even classes at the London School of Economics, and a humble personal appeal to the director of that institution to recommend a course bearing on the flower business. He, being a humorist, explained to them the method of the celebrated Dickensian essay on Chinese Metaphysics by the gentleman who read an article on China and an article on Metaphysics and combined the information. He suggested that they should combine the London School with Kew Gardens. Eliza, to whom the procedure of the Dickensian gentleman seemed perfectly correct (as in fact it was) and not in the least funny (which was only her ignorance), took his advice with entire gravity. But the effort that cost her the deepest humiliation was a request to Higgins, whose pet artistic fancy, next to Milton's verse, was calligraphy, and who himself wrote a most beautiful Italian hand, that he would teach her to write. He declared that she was congenitally incapable of form-

ing a single letter worthy of the least of Milton's words; but she persisted, and again he suddenly threw himself into the task of teaching her with a combination of stormy intensity, concentrated patience, and occasional bursts of interesting disquisition on the beauty and nobility, the august mission and destiny, of human handwriting. Eliza ended by acquiring an extremely uncommercial script which was a positive extension of her personal beauty, and spending three times as much on stationery as anyone else because certain qualities and shapes of paper became indispensable to her. She could not even address an envelope in the usual way because it made the margins all wrong.

Their commercial schooldays were a period of disgrace and despair for the young couple. They seemed to be learning nothing about flower shops. At last they gave it up as hopeless, and shook the dust of the shorthand schools, and the polytechnics, and the London School of Economics from their feet for ever. Besides, the business was in some mysterious way beginning to take care of itself. They had somehow forgotten their objections to employing other people. They came to the conclusion that their own way was the best, and that they had really a remarkable talent for business. The Colonel, who had been compelled for some years to keep a sufficient sum on current account at his bankers to make up their deficits, found that the provision was unnecessary: the young people were prospering. It is true that there was not quite fair play between them and their competitors in trade. Their week-ends in the country cost them nothing, and saved them the price of their Sunday dinners; for the motor car was the Colonel's, and he and Higgins paid the hotel bills. Mr F. Hill, florist and greengrocer (they soon discovered that there was money in asparagus, and asparagus led to other vegetables), had an air which stamped the business as classy, and in private life he was still Frederick Eynsford Hill, Esquire. Not that there was any swank about him: nobody but Eliza knew that he had been christened Frederick Challoner. Eliza herself swanked like anything.

That is all. That is how it has turned out.

It is astonishing how much Eliza still manages to meddle in the housekeeping at Wimpole Street in spite of the shop and her own family. And it is notable that though she never nags her husband, and frankly loves the Colonel as if she were his favorite daughter, she has never got out of the habit of nagging Higgins that was established on the fatal night when she won his bet for him. She snaps his head off on the faintest provocation, or on none. He no longer dares to tease her by assuming an abysmal inferiority of Freddy's mind to his own. He storms and bullies and derides; but she stands up to him so ruthlessly that the Colonel has to ask her from time to time to be kinder to Higgins, and it is the only request of his that brings a mulish expression into her face. Nothing but some emergency or calamity great enough to break down all likes and dislikes, and throw them both back on their common humanity—and may they be spared any such trial!—will ever alter this. She knows that Higgins does not need her, just as her father did not need her. The very scrupulousness with which he told her that day that he had become used to having her there, and dependent on her for all sorts of little services, and that he should miss her if she went away (it would never have occurred to Freddy or the Colonel to say anything of the sort) deepens her inner certainty that she is "no more to him than them slippers", yet she has a sense, too, that his indifference is deeper than the infatuation of commoner souls. She is immensely interested in him. She has even secret mischievous moments in which she wishes she could get him alone, on a desert island, away from all ties and with nobody else in the world to consider, and just drag him off his pedestal and see him making love like any common man. We all have private imaginations of that sort. But when it comes to business, to the life that she really leads as distinguished from the life of dreams and fancies, she likes Freddy and she likes the Colonel, and she does not like Higgins and Mr Doolittle. Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable.

THE END

XXIV

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

A FANTASIA IN THE RUSSIAN MANNER ON ENGLISH THEMES

ACT I

The hilly country in the middle of the north edge of Sussex, looking very pleasant on a fine evening at the end of September, is seen through the windows of a room which has been built so as to resemble the after part of an old-fashioned high-pooped ship with a stern gallery, for the windows are ship built with heavy timbering, and run right across the room as continuously as the stability of the wall allows. A row of lockers under the windows provides an upholstered window-seat interrupted by turn glass doors, respectively halfway between the stern post and the sides. Another door strains the illusion a little by being apparently in the ship's port side, and yet leading, not to the open sea, but to the entrance hall of the house. Between this door and the stern gallery are bookshelves. There are electric light switches beside the door leading to the hall and the glass doors in the stern gallery. Against the starboard wall is a carpenter's bench. The vice has a board in its jaws, and the floor is littered with shavings, overflowing from a waste-paper basket. A couple of planes and a centrebit are on the bench. In the same wall, between the bench and the windows, is a narrow doorway with a half door, above which a glimpse of the room beyond shows that it is a shelved pantry with bottles and kitchen crockery.

On the starboard side, but close to the middle, is a plain oak drawing-table with drawing-board, T-square, straightedges, set squares, mathematical instruments, saucers of water color, a tumbler of discolored water, Indian ink, pencils, and brushes on it. The drawing-board is set so that the draughtsman's chair has the window on its left hand. On the floor at the end of the table, on his right, is a ship's fire bucket. On the port side of the room, near the bookshelves, is a sofa with its back to the windows. It is a sturdy mahogany article, oddly upholstered in sailcloth, including the bolster, with a couple of blankets hanging over the back. Between the sofa and the drawing-table is a big wicker chair, with broad arms and a low sloping back, with its back to the light. A small but stout table of teak, with a round top and gate legs, stands against the port wall between the door and the bookcase. It is the

only article in the room that suggests (not at all convincingly) a roman's hand in the furnishing. The uncarpeted floor of narrow boards is caulked and holystoned like a deck.

The garden to which the glass doors lead dips to the south before the landscape rises again to the hills. Emerging from the hollow is the cupola of an observatory. Between the observatory and the house is a flagstaff on a little esplanade, with a hammock on the east side and a long garden seat on the west.

A young lady, gloved and hatted, with a dust coat on, is sitting in the window-seat with her body twisted to enable her to look out at the view. One hand props her chin, the other hangs down with a volume of the Temple Shakespeare in it, and her finger stuck in the page she has been reading. A clock strikes six.

The young lady turns and looks at her watch. She rises with an air of one who waits and is almost at the end of her patience. She is a pretty girl, slender, fair, and intelligent looking, nicely but not expensively dressed, evidently not a smart idler.

With a sigh of weary resignation she comes to the draughtsman's chair, sits down, and begins to read Shakespeare. Presently the book sinks to her lap, her eyes close, and she dozes into a slumber.

An elderly womanservant comes in from the hall with three unopened bottles of rum on a tray. She passes through and disappears in the pantry without noticing the young lady. She places the bottles on the shelf and fills her tray with empty bottles. As she returns with these, the young lady lets her book drop, awakening herself, and startling the womanservant so that she all but lets the tray fall.

THE WOMANSERVANT God bless us! [The young lady picks up the book and places it on the table] Sorry to wake you, miss, I'm sure, but you are a stranger to me. What might you be waiting here for now?

THE YOUNG LADY Waiting for somebody to shew some signs of knowing that I have been invited here.

THE WOMANSERVANT Oh, you're invited, are you? And has nobody come? Dear! dear!

THE YOUNG LADY A wild-looking old gentleman came and looked in at the window, and I heard him calling out "Nurse there is a young and attractive female waiting in the poop Go and see what she wants" Are you the nurse?

THE WOMAN SERVANT Yes, miss I'm Nurse Guinness. That was old Captain Shotover, Mrs Hushabye's father I heard him roaring; but I thought it was for something else I suppose it was Mrs Hushabye that invited you, ducky?

THE YOUNG LADY I understood her to do so But really I think I'd better go

NURSE GUINNESS Oh, dont think of such a thing, miss If Mrs Hushabye has forgotten all about it, it will be a pleasant surprise for her to see you, wont it?

THE YOUNG LADY It has been a very unpleasant surprise to me to find that nobody expects me

NURSE GUINNESS You'll get used to it, miss this house is full of surprises for them that dont know our ways

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*looking in from the hall suddenly, an ancient but still hardy man with an immense white beard, in a reefer jacket with a whistle hanging from his neck*] Nurse there is a hold-all and a handbag on the front steps for everybody to fall over Also a tennis racquet Who the devil left them there?

THE YOUNG LADY They are mine, I'm afraid.

THE CAPTAIN [*advancing to the drawing-table*] Nurse who is this misguided and unfortunate young lady?

NURSE GUINNESS She says Miss Hussy invited her, sir

THE CAPTAIN And had she no friend, no parents, to warn her against my daughter's invitations? This is a pretty sort of house, by heavens! A young and attractive lady is invited here Her luggage is left on the steps for hours; and she herself is deposited in the poop and abandoned, tired and starving. This is our hospitality These are our manners No room ready No hot water No welcoming hostess Our visitor is to sleep in the toolshed, and to wash in the duckpond

NURSE GUINNESS. Now it's all right, Captain I'll get the lady some tea, and her room shall be ready before she has finished it [*To the young lady*] Take off your hat, ducky; and make yourself at home [*she goes to the door leading to the hall*]

THE CAPTAIN [*as she passes him*] Ducky! Do you suppose, woman, that because this young lady has been insulted and neglected, you have the right to address her as you address my wretched children, whom you have brought up in ignorance of the commonest decencies of social intercourse?

NURSE GUINNESS Never mind him, doty [*Quite unconcerned, she goes out into the hall on her way to the kitchen*]

THE CAPTAIN Madam will you favor me with your name? [*He sits down in the big wicker chair*]

THE YOUNG LADY My name is Ellie Dunn.

THE CAPTAIN Dunn! I had a boatswain whose name was Dunn He was originally a pirate in China He set up as a ship's chandler with stores which I have every reason to believe he stole from me No doubt he became rich Are you his daughter?

ELLIE [*indignant*] No: certainly not. I am proud to be able to say that though my father has not been a successful man, nobody has ever had one word to say against him I think my father is the best man I have ever known

THE CAPTAIN He must be greatly changed Has he attained the seventh degree of concentration?

ELLIE I dont understand

THE CAPTAIN. But how could he, with a daughter? I, madam, have two daughters One of them is Hesione Hushabye, who invited you here I keep this house: she upsets it I desire to attain the seventh degree of concentration. she invites visitors and leaves me to entertain them. [*Nurse Guinness returns with the tea-tray, which she places on the teak table*] I have a second daughter who is, thank God, in a remote part of the Empire with her numskull of a husband As a child she thought the figure-head of my ship, the Dauntless, the most beautiful thing on earth. He resembled it He had the same expression wooden yet enterprising She married him, and will never set foot in this house again.

NURSE GUINNESS [*carrying the table, with the tea-things on it, to Ellie's side*] Indeed you never were more mistaken She is in England this very moment You have been told three times this week that she is coming home for a year for her health And very glad you should be to see your own daughter again after all these years

THE CAPTAIN. I am not glad The natural

term of the affection of the human animal for its offspring is six years. My daughter Ariadne was born when I was forty-six. I am now eighty-eight. If she comes, I am not at home. If she wants anything, let her take it. If she asks for me, let her be informed that I am extremely old, and have totally forgotten her.

NURSE GUINNESS That's no talk to offer to a young lady. Here, ducky, have some tea, and don't listen to him [*she pours out a cup of tea*].

THE CAPTAIN [*rising wrathfully*] Now before high heaven they have given this innocent child Indian tea, the stuff they tan their own leather insides with [*He seizes the cup and the tea-pot and empties both into the leathern bucket*].

ELLIE [*almost in tears*] Oh, please! I am so tired. I should have been glad of anything.

NURSE GUINNESS Oh, what a thing to do! The poor lamb is ready to drop.

THE CAPTAIN You shall have some of my tea. Do not touch that fly-blown cake nobody eats it here except the dogs [*He disappears into the pantry*].

NURSE GUINNESS There's a man for you! They say he sold himself to the devil in Zanzibar before he was a captain, and the older he grows the more I believe them.

A WOMAN'S VOICE [*in the hall*] Is anyone at home? Hesione! Nurse! Papa! Do come, somebody, and take in my luggage.

Thumping heard, as of an umbrella, on the main-scot.

NURSE GUINNESS My gracious! It's Miss Addie, Lady Utterword, Mrs Hushabye's sister, the one I told the Captain about [*Calling*] Coming, Miss, coming.

She carries the table back to its place by the door, and is hurrying out when she is intercepted by Lady Utterword, who bursts in much flustered. Lady Utterword, a blonde, is very handsome, very well dressed, and so precipitate in speech and action that the first impression (erroneous) is one of comic silliness.

LADY UTTERWORD Oh, is that you, Nurse? How are you? You don't look a day older. Is nobody at home? Where is Hesione? Doesn't she expect me? Where are the servants? Whose luggage is that on the steps? Where's Papa? Is everybody asleep? [*Seeing Ellie*] Oh! I beg your pardon. I suppose you are one of my nieces [*Approaching her with outstretched arms*] Come and kiss your aunt, darling.

ELLIE I'm only a visitor. It is my luggage on the steps.

NURSE GUINNESS I'll go get you some fresh tea, ducky [*She takes up the tray*].

ELLIE But the old gentleman said he would make some himself.

NURSE GUINNESS Bless you! he's forgotten what he went for already. His mind wanders from one thing to another.

LADY UTTERWORD Papa, I suppose?

NURSE GUINNESS Yes, Miss.

LADY UTTERWORD [*vehemently*] Don't be silly, nurse. Don't call me Miss.

NURSE GUINNESS [*placidly*] No, lovey [*she goes out with the tea-tray*].

LADY UTTERWORD [*sitting down with a flourish on the sofa*] I know what you must feel. Oh, this house, this house! I come back to it after twenty-three years, and it is just the same: the luggage lying on the steps, the servants spoilt and impossible, nobody at home to receive anybody, no regular meals, nobody ever hungry because they are always gnawing bread and butter or munching apples, and, what is worse, the same disorder in ideas, in talk, in feeling. When I was a child I was used to it. I had never known anything better, though I was unhappy, and longed all the time—oh, how I longed!—to be respectable, to be a lady, to live as others did, not to have to think of everything for myself. I married at nineteen to escape from it. My husband is Sir Hastings Utterword, who has been governor of all the crown colonies in succession. I have always been the mistress of Government House. I have been so happy. I had forgotten that people could live like this. I wanted to see my father, my sister, my nephews and nieces (one ought to, you know), and I was looking forward to it. And now the state of the house! the way I'm received! the casual impudence of that woman Guinness, our old nurse! really Hesione might at least have been here some preparation might have been made for me. You must excuse my going on in this way, but I am really very much hurt and annoyed and disillusioned, and if I had realized it was to be like this, I wouldn't have come. I have a great mind to go away without another word [*she is on the point of weeping*].

ELLIE [*also very miserable*] Nobody has been here to receive me either. I thought I ought to go away too. But how can I, Lady Utterword? My luggage is on the steps, and the station fly has gone.

The Captain emerges from the pantry with a

tray of Chinese lacquer and a very fine tea-set on it. He rests it provisionally on the end of the table, snatches away the drawing-board, which he stands on the floor against the table legs, and puts the tray in the space thus cleared. Ellie pours out a cup greedily.

THE CAPTAIN. Your tea, young lady. What! another lady! I must fetch another cup [*he makes for the pantry*]

LADY UTTERWORD [*rising from the sofa, suffused with emotion*]. Papa! Don't you know me? I'm your daughter.

THE CAPTAIN. Nonsense! my daughter's upstairs asleep [*He vanishes through the half door*].

Lady Utterword retires to the window to conceal her tears

ELLIE [*going to her with the cup*]. Don't be so distressed. Have this cup of tea. He is very old and very strange; he has been just like that to me. I know how dreadful it must be. My own father is all the world to me. Oh, I'm sure he didn't mean it.

The Captain returns with another cup.

THE CAPTAIN. Now we are complete [*He places it on the tray*].

LADY UTTERWORD [*hysterically*]. Papa, you can't have forgotten me. I am Ariadne. I'm little Paddy Patkins. Won't you kiss me? [*She goes to him and throws her arms round his neck*].

THE CAPTAIN [*woodenly enduring her embrace*]. How can you be Ariadne? You are a middle-aged woman, well preserved, madam, but no longer young.

LADY UTTERWORD. But think of all the years and years I have been away, Papa. I have had to grow old, like other people.

THE CAPTAIN [*disengaging himself*]. You should grow out of kissing strange men; they may be striving to attain the seventh degree of concentration.

LADY UTTERWORD. But I'm your daughter. You haven't seen me for years.

THE CAPTAIN. So much the worse! When our relatives are at home, we have to think of all their good points or it would be impossible to endure them. But when they are away, we console ourselves for their absence by dwelling on their vices. That is how I have come to think my absent daughter Ariadne a perfect fiend, so do not try to ingratiate yourself here by impersonating her [*he walks firmly away to the other side of the room*].

LADY UTTERWORD. Ingratiating myself indeed [*With dignity*]. Very well, papa. [*She sits*

down at the drawing-table and pours out tea for herself].

THE CAPTAIN. I am neglecting my social duties. You remember Dunn? Billy Dunn?

LADY UTTERWORD. Do you mean that villainous sailor who robbed you?

THE CAPTAIN [*introducing Ellie*]. His daughter. [*He sits down on the sofa*].

ELLIE [*protesting*]. No—

Nurse Guinness returns with fresh tea

THE CAPTAIN. Take that hogwash away. Do you hear?

NURSE. You've actually remembered about the tea! [*To Ellie*]. O, miss, he didn't forget you after all! You have made an impression.

THE CAPTAIN [*gloomily*]. Youth! beauty! novelty! They are badly wanted in this house. I am excessively old. Hesione is only moderately young. Her children are not youthful.

LADY UTTERWORD. How can children be expected to be youthful in this house? Almost before we could speak we were filled with notions that might have been all very well for pagan philosophers of fifty, but were certainly quite unfit for respectable people of any age.

NURSE. You were always for respectability, Miss Addy.

LADY UTTERWORD. Nurse, will you please remember that I am Lady Utterword, and not Miss Addy, nor lovey, nor darling, nor doty? Do you hear?

NURSE. Yes, ducky, all right. I'll tell them all they must call you my lady. [*She takes her tray out with undisturbed placidity*].

LADY UTTERWORD. What comfort? What sense is there in having servants with no manners?

ELLIE [*rising and coming to the table to put down her empty cup*]. Lady Utterword, do you think Mrs. Hushabye really expects me?

LADY UTTERWORD. Oh, don't ask me. You can see for yourself that I've just arrived, her only sister, after twenty-three years' absence! and it seems that I am not expected.

THE CAPTAIN. What does it matter whether the young lady is expected or not? She is welcome. There are beds, there is food. I'll find a room for her myself [*he makes for the door*].

ELLIE [*following him to stop him*]. Oh, please— [*he goes out*]. Lady Utterword, I don't know what to do. Your father persists in believing that my father is some sailor who robbed

him

LADY UTTERWORD You had better pretend not to notice it My father is a very clever man, but he always forgot things, and now that he is old, of course he is worse And I must warn you that it is sometimes very hard to feel quite sure that he really forgets

Mrs Hushabye bursts into the room tempestuously, and embraces Ellie She is a couple of years older than Lady Utterword, and even better looking She has magnificent black hair, eyes like the fishpools of Heshbon, and a nobly modelled neck, short at the back and low between her shoulders in front Unlike her sister she is uncorseted and dressed anyhow in a rich robe of black pile that shows off her white skin and statuesque contour

MRS HUSHABYE Ellie, my darling, my pettikins [*kissing her*] how long have you been here? I've been at home all the time I was putting flowers and things in your room, and when I just sat down for a moment to try how comfortable the armchair was I went off to sleep Papa woke me and told me you were here Fancy your finding no one, and being neglected and abandoned [*Kissing her again*] My poor love! [*She deposits Ellie on the sofa Meanwhile Ariadne has left the table and come over to claim her share of attention*] Oh! you've brought someone with you Introduce me

LADY UTTERWORD Hesione is it possible that you don't know me?

MRS HUSHABYE [*conventionally*] Of course I remember your face quite well Where have we met?

LADY UTTERWORD Didn't Papa tell you I was here? Oh! this is really too much [*She throws herself sulkily into the big chair*]

MRS HUSHABYE Papa!

LADY UTTERWORD Yes Papa Our papa, you unfeeling wretch [*Rising angrily*] I'll go straight to a hotel

MRS HUSHABYE [*seizing her by the shoulders*] My goodness gracious goodness, you don't mean to say that you're Addy!

LADY UTTERWORD I certainly am Addy, and I don't think I can be so changed that you would not have recognized me if you had any real affection for me And papa didn't think me even worth mentioning!

MRS HUSHABYE What a lark! Sit down [*she pushes her back into the chair instead of kissing her, and posts herself behind it*] You do look a swell You're much handsomer than you used to be You've made the acquaintance of Ellie,

of course She is going to marry a perfect hog of a millionaire for the sake of her father, who is as poor as a church mouse, and you must help me to stop her

ELLIE Oh please, Hesione

MRS HUSHABYE My pettikins, the man's coming here today with your father to begin persecuting you, and everybody will see the state of the case in ten minutes, so what's the use of making a secret of it?

ELLIE He is not a hog, Hesione You don't know how wonderfully good he was to my father, and how deeply grateful I am to him

MRS HUSHABYE [*to Lady Utterword*] Her father is a very remarkable man, Addy His name is Mazzini Dunn Mazzini was a celebrity of some kind who knew Ellie's grandparents They were both poets, like the Brownings, and when her father came into the world Mazzini said "Another soldier born for freedom!" So they christened him Mazzini, and he has been fighting for freedom in his quiet way ever since That's why he is so poor

ELLIE I am proud of his poverty

MRS HUSHABYE Of course you are, pettikins Why not leave him in it, and marry someone you love?

LADY UTTERWORD [*rising suddenly and explosively*] Hesione are you going to kiss me or are you not?

MRS HUSHABYE What do you want to be kissed for?

LADY UTTERWORD I don't want to be kissed, but I do want you to behave properly and decently We are sisters We have been separated for twenty-three years You ought to kiss me

MRS HUSHABYE Tomorrow morning, dear, before you make up I hate the smell of powder

LADY UTTERWORD Oh! you unfeeling—[*she is interrupted by the return of the captain*]

THE CAPTAIN [*to Ellie*] Your room is ready [*Ellie rises*] The sheets were damp, but I have changed them [*he makes for the garden door on the port side*]

LADY UTTERWORD Oh! What about my sheets?

THE CAPTAIN [*halting at the door*] Take my advice air them, or take them off and sleep in blankets You shall sleep in Ariadne's old room

LADY UTTERWORD Indeed I shall do nothing of the sort. That little hole! I am entitled

to the best spare room

THE CAPTAIN [*continuing unmoved*] She married a numskull She told me she would marry anyone to get away from home

LADY UTTERWORD You are pretending not to know me on purpose I will leave the house

Mazzini Dunn enters from the hall. He is a little elderly man with bulging credulous eyes and earnest manners He is dressed in a blue serge jacket suit with an unbuttoned mackintosh over it, and carries a soft black hat of clerical cut

ELLIE At last! Captain Shotover here is my father

THE CAPTAIN This! Nonsense! not a bit like him [*he goes away through the garden, shutting the door sharply behind him*]

LADY UTTERWORD I will not be ignored and pretended to be somebody else I will have it out with papa now, this instant [*To Mazzini*] Excuse me [*She follows the Captain out, making a hasty bow to Mazzini, who returns it*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*hospitably, shaking hands*] How good of you to come, Mr Dunn! You dont mind papa, do you? He is as mad as a hatter, you know, but quite harmless, and extremely clever You will have some delightful talks with him

MAZZINI I hope so [*To Ellie*] So here you are, Ellie, dear [*He draws her arm affectionately through his*] I must thank you, Mrs Hushabye, for your kindness to my daughter I'm afraid she would have had no holiday if you had not invited her

MRS HUSHABYE Not at all Very nice of her to come and attract young people to the house for us

MAZZINI [*smiling*] I'm afraid Ellie is not interested in young men, Mrs Hushabye Her taste is on the graver, soldier side

MRS HUSHABYE [*with a sudden rather hard brightness in her manner*] Wont you take off your overcoat, Mr Dunn? You will find a cupboard for coats and hats and things in the corner of the hall

MAZZINI [*hastily releasing Ellie*] Yes—thank you—I had better—[*he goes out*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*emphatically*] The old brute!

ELLIE Who?

MRS HUSHABYE Who! Him He It [*pointing after Mazzini*] "Graver, soldier tastes," indeed!

ELLIE [*aghast*] You dont mean that you were speaking like that of my father!

MRS HUSHABYE I was You know I was

ELLIE [*with dignity*] I will leave your house at once [*She turns to the door*]

MRS HUSHABYE If you attempt it, I'll tell your father why

ELLIE [*turning again*] Oh! How can you treat a visitor like this, Mrs Hushabye?

MRS HUSHABYE I thought you were going to call me Hesione

ELLIE Certainly not now?

MRS HUSHABYE Very well I'll tell your father

ELLIE [*distressed*] Oh!

MRS HUSHABYE If you turn a hair—if you take his part against me and against your own heart for a moment, I'll give that born soldier of freedom a piece of my mind that will stand him on his selfish old head for a week

ELLIE Hesione! My father selfish! How little you know—

She is interrupted by Mazzini, who returns, excited and perspiring.

MAZZINI Ellie Mangan has come I thought you'd like to know Excuse me, Mrs Hushabye. the strange old gentleman—

MRS HUSHABYE Papa Quite so

MAZZINI Oh, I beg your pardon of course I was a little confused by his manner He is making Mangan help him with something in the garden, and he wants me too—

A powerful whistle is heard

THE CAPTAIN'S VOICE Bosun ahoy! [*the whistle is repeated*]

MAZZINI [*flustered*] Oh dear! I believe he is whistling for me [*He hurries out*]

MRS HUSHABYE Now my father is a wonderful man if you like

ELLIE Hesione. listen to me You dont understand My father and Mr Mangan were boys together Mr Ma—

MRS HUSHABYE I dont care what they were we must sit down if you are going to begin as far back as that [*She snatches at Ellie's waist, and makes her sit down on the sofa beside her*] Now, pettikins tell me all about Mr Mangan They call him Boss Mangan, dont they? He is a Napoleon of industry and disgustingly rich, isnt he? Why isnt your father rich?

ELLIE My poor father should never have been in business His parents were poets, and they gave him the noblest ideas; but they could not afford to give him a profession.

MRS HUSHABYE Fancy your grandparents, with their eyes in fine frenzy rolling! And so

your poor father had to go into business Hasnt he succeeded in it?

ELLIE He always used to say he could succeed if he only had some capital He fought his way along, to keep a roof over our heads and bring us up well, but it was always a struggle always the same difficulty of not having capital enough I dont know how to describe it to you

MRS HUSHABYE Poor Ellie! I know Pulling the devil by the tail

ELLIE [*hurt*] Oh no Not like that It was at least dignified

MRS HUSHABYE That made it all the harder, didnt it? I shouldnt have pulled the devil by the tail with dignity I should have pulled hard—[*between her teeth*] hard Well? Go on

ELLIE At last it seemed that all our troubles were at an end Mr Mangan did an extraordinarily noble thing out of pure friendship for my father and respect for his character He asked him how much capital he wanted, and gave it to him I dont mean that he lent it to him, or that he invested it in his business He just simply made him a present of it Wasnt that splendid of him?

MRS HUSHABYE. On condition that you married him?

ELLIE Oh no, no, no This was when I was a child He had never even seen me he never came to our house It was absolutely disinterested Pure generosity

MRS HUSHABYE Oh! I beg the gentleman's pardon Well, what became of the money?

ELLIE We all got new clothes and moved into another house And I went to another school for two years

MRS HUSHABYE Only two years?

ELLIE That was all, for at the end of two years my father was utterly ruined

MRS HUSHABYE How?

ELLIE I dont know I never could understand But it was dreadful When we were poor my father had never been in debt But when he launched out into business on a large scale, he had to incur liabilities When the business went into liquidation he owed more money than Mr Mangan had given him

MRS HUSHABYE Bit off more than he could chew, I suppose

ELLIE. I think you are a little unfeeling about it

MRS HUSHABYE My pettikins you mustnt mind my way of talking I was quite as sensitive and particular as you once, but I

have picked up so much slang from the children that I am really hardly presentable I suppose your father had no head for business, and made a mess of it

ELLIE Oh, that just shows how entirely you are mistaken about him The business turned out a great success It now pays forty-four per cent after deducting the excess profits tax

MRS HUSHABYE Then why arnt you rolling in money?

ELLIE I dont know It seems very unfair to me You see, my father was made bankrupt It nearly broke his heart, because he had persuaded several of his friends to put money into the business He was sure it would succeed, and events proved that he was quite right But they all lost their money It was dreadful I dont know what we should have done but for Mr Mangan

MRS HUSHABYE What! Did the Boss come to the rescue again, after all his money being thrown away?

ELLIE. He did indeed, and never uttered a reproach to my father He bought what was left of the business—the buildings and the machinery and things—from the official trustee for enough money to enable my father to pay six and eightpence in the pound and get his discharge Everyone pitied papa so much, and saw so plainly that he was an honorable man, that they let him off at six-and-eightpence instead of ten shillings Then Mr Mangan started a company to take up the business, and made my father a manager in it to save us from starvation, for I wasnt earning anything then

MRS HUSHABYE Quite a romance And when did the Boss develop the tender passion?

ELLIE Oh, that was years after, quite lately He took the chair one night at a sort of people's concert. I was singing there As an amateur, you know half a guinea for expenses and three songs with three encores He was so pleased with my singing that he asked might he walk home with me I never saw anyone so taken aback as he was when I took him home and introduced him to my father his own manager It was then that my father told me how nobly he had behaved Of course it was considered a great chance for me, as he is so rich And—and—we drifted into a sort of understanding—I suppose I should call it an engagement—[*she is distressed and cannot go on*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*rising and marching about*] You may have drifted into it, but you will bounce out of it, my pettikins, if I am to have anything to do with it

ELLIE [*hopelessly*] No, it's no use I am bound in honor and gratitude I will go through with it

MRS HUSHABYE [*behind the sofa, scolding down at her*] You know, of course, that it's not honorable or grateful to marry a man you don't love. Do you love this Mangan man?

ELLIE Yes At least—

MRS HUSHABYE I don't want to know about "the least". I want to know the worst. Girls of your age fall in love with all sorts of impossible people, especially old people

ELLIE I like Mr Mangan very much, and I shall always be—

MRS HUSHABYE [*impatiently completing the sentence and prancing away intolerantly to starboard*]—grateful to him for his kindness to dear father I know. Anybody else?

ELLIE What do you mean?

MRS HUSHABYE Anybody else? Are you in love with anybody else?

ELLIE Of course not

MRS HUSHABYE Humph! [*The book on the drawing-table catches her eye. She picks it up, and evidently finds the title very unexpected. She looks at Ellie, and asks, quaintly*] Quite sure you're not in love with an actor?

ELLIE No, no. Why? What put such a thing into your head?

MRS HUSHABYE This is yours, isn't it? Why else should you be reading Othello?

ELLIE My father taught me to love Shakespeare

MRS HUSHABYE [*flinging the book down on the table*] Really! your father does seem to be about the limit

ELLIE [*naïvely*] Do you never read Shakespeare, Hesione? That seems to me so extraordinary. I like Othello

MRS HUSHABYE Do you indeed? He was jealous, wasn't he?

ELLIE Oh, not that. I think all the part about jealousy is horrible. But don't you think it must have been a wonderful experience for Desdemona, brought up so quietly at home, to meet a man who had been out in the world doing all sorts of brave things and having terrible adventures, and yet finding something in her that made him love to sit and talk with her and tell her about

them?

MRS HUSHABYE That's your idea of romance, is it?

ELLIE Not romance, exactly. It might really happen

Ellie's eyes shew that she is not arguing, but in a daydream Mrs Hushabye, natching her inquisitively, goes deliberately back to the sofa and resumes her seat beside her

MRS HUSHABYE Ellie darling have you noticed that some of those stories that Othello told Desdemona couldn't have happened?

ELLIE Oh no. Shakespear thought they could have happened

MRS HUSHABYE Hm! Desdemona thought they could have happened. But they didn't

ELLIE Why do you look so enigmatic about it? You are such a sphinx. I never know what you mean

MRS HUSHABYE Desdemona would have found him out if she had lived, you know. I wonder was that why he strangled her!

ELLIE Othello was not telling lies

MRS HUSHABYE How do you know?

ELLIE Shakespear would have said if he was Hesione there are men who have done wonderful things. Men like Othello, only, of course, white, and very handsome, and—

MRS HUSHABYE Ah! Now we're coming to it. Tell me all about him. I knew there must be somebody, or you'd never have been so miserable about Mangan. You'd have thought it quite a lark to marry him

ELLIE [*blushing vividly*] Hesione you are dreadful. But I don't want to make a secret of it, though of course I don't tell everybody. Besides, I don't know him

MRS HUSHABYE Don't know him! What does that mean?

ELLIE Well, of course I know him to speak to

MRS HUSHABYE But you want to know him ever so much more intimately, eh?

ELLIE No no. I know him quite—almost intimately.

MRS HUSHABYE You don't know him; and you know him almost intimately. How lucid!

ELLIE I mean that he does not call on us I—I got into conversation with him by chance at a concert

MRS HUSHABYE You seem to have rather a gay time at your concerts, Ellie

ELLIE Not at all. We talk to everyone in the green-room waiting for our turns. I

ELLIE [*embracing her*] Hesione you are a witch How do you know? Oh, you are the most sympathetic woman in the world

MRS HUSHABYE [*caressing her*] Pettikins, my pettikins how I envy you! and how I pity you!

ELLIE Pity me! Oh, why?

A very handsome man of fifty, with moustaire moustaches, wearing a rather dandified curly brimmed hat, and carrying an elaborate walking-stick, comes into the room from the hall, and stops short at sight of the women on the sofa

ELLIE [*seeing him and rising in glad surprise*] Oh! Hesione this is Mr Marcus Darnley

MRS HUSHABYE [*rising*] What a lark! He is my husband

ELLIE But how—[*she stops suddenly, then turns pale and sways*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*catching her and sitting down with her on the sofa*] Steady, my pettikins

THE MAN [*with a mixture of confusion and effrontery, depositing his hat and stick on the teak table*] My real name, Miss Dunn, is Hector Hushabye I leave you to judge whether that is a name any sensitive man would care to confess to I never use it when I can possibly help it I have been away for nearly a month, and I had no idea you knew my wife, or that you were coming here I am none the less delighted to find you in our little house

ELLIE [*in great distress*] I dont know what to do Please, may I speak to papa? Do leave me I cant bear it

MRS HUSHABYE. Be off, Hector

HECTOR I—

MRS HUSHABYE Quick, quick Get out

HECTOR If you think it better—[*he goes out, taking his hat with him but leaving the stick on the table*].

MRS HUSHABYE [*laying Ellie down at the end of the sofa*] Now, pettikins, he is gone Theres nobody but me You can let yourself go Dont try to control yourself Have a good cry.

ELLIE [*raising her head*] Damn!

MRS HUSHABYE Splendid! Oh, what a relief! I thought you were going to be broken-hearted Never mind me Damn him again

ELLIE I am not damning him I am damning myself for being such a fool [*Rising*] How could I let myself be taken in so? [*She begins prowling to and fro, her bloom gone, looking curiously older and harder*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*cheerfully*] Why not, pettikins? Very few young women can resist Hector I couldnt when I was your age He is really rather splendid, you know

ELLIE [*turning on her*] Splendid! Yes splendid looking, of course But how can you love a har?

MRS HUSHABYE I dont know But you can, fortunately Otherwise there wouldnt be much love in the world

ELLIE But to be like that! To be a boaster! a coward!

MRS HUSHABYE [*rising in alarm*] Pettikins none of that, if you please If you hint the slightest doubt of Hector's courage, he will go straight off and do the most horribly dangerous things to convince himself that he isnt a coward. He has a dreadful trick of getting out of one third-floor window and coming in at another, just to test his nerve He has a whole drawerful of Albert Medals for saving people's lives

ELLIE He never told me that

MRS HUSHABYE He never boasts of anything he really did. he cant bear it; and it makes him shy if anyone else does All his stories are made-up stories

ELLIE [*coming to her*] Do you mean that he is really brave, and really has adventures, and yet tells lies about things that he never did and that never happened?

MRS HUSHABYE Yes, pettikins, I do People dont have their virtues and vices in sets they have them anyhow all mixed

ELLIE [*staring at her thoughtfully*] Theres something odd about this house, Hesione, and even about you. I dont know why I'm talking to you so calmly I have a horrible fear that my heart is broken, but that heart-break is not like what I thought it must be

MRS HUSHABYE [*fondling her*] It's only life educating you, pettikins How do you feel about Boss Mangan now?

ELLIE [*disengaging herself with an expression of distaste*] Oh, how can you remind me of him, Hesione?

MRS HUSHABYE Sorry, dear I think I hear Hector coming back You dont mind now, do you, dear?

ELLIE Not in the least I am quite cured *Mazzini Dunn and Hector come in from the hall*

HECTOR [*as he opens the door and allows Mazzini to pass in*] One second more, and she would have been a dead woman!

MAZZINI Dear' dear' what an escape! Ellie, my love Mr Hushabye has just been telling me the most extraordinary—

ELLIE Yes I've heard it [*she crosses to the other side of the room*]

HECTOR [*following her*] Not this one I'll tell it to you after dinner I think you'll like it The truth is, I made it up for you, and was looking forward to the pleasure of telling it to you But in a moment of impatience at being turned out of the room, I threw it away on your father

ELLIE [*turning at bay with her back to the carpenter's bench, scornfully self-possessed*] It was not thrown away He believes it I should not have believed it

MAZZINI [*benevolently*] Ellie is very naughty, Mr Hushabye Of course she does not really think that [*He goes to the bookshelves, and inspects the titles of the volumes*]

Boss Mangan comes in from the hall, followed by the Captain Mangan, carefully frock-coated as for church or for a directors' meeting, is about fifty-five, with a careworn, mistrustful expression, standing a little on an entirely imaginary dignity, with a dull complexion, straight, lustreless hair, and features so entirely commonplace that it is impossible to describe them

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*to Mrs Hushabye, introducing the new comer*] Says his name is Mangan Not able-bodied

MRS HUSHABYE [*graciously*] How do you do, Mr Mangan?

MANGAN [*shaking hands*] Very pleased

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Dunn's lost his muscle, but recovered his nerve Men seldom do after three attacks of delirium tremens [*he goes into the pantry*]

MRS HUSHABYE I congratulate you, Mr Dunn

MAZZINI [*dazed*] I am a lifelong teetotaler

MRS HUSHABYE You will find it far less trouble to let papa have his own way than try to explain

MAZZINI But three attacks of delirium tremens, really!

MRS HUSHABYE [*to Mangan*] Do you know my husband, Mr Mangan [*she indicates Hector*]

MANGAN [*going to Hector, who meets him with outstretched hand*] Very pleased [*Turning to Ellie*] I hope, Miss Ellie, you have not found the journey down too fatiguing [*They shake hands*]

MRS HUSHABYE Hector shew Mr Dunn his

room

HECTOR Certainly Come along, Mr Dunn [*He takes Mazzini out*]

FILIF You havnt shewn me my room yet, Hiesione

MRS HUSHABYE How stupid of me! Come along. Make yourself quite at home, Mr Mangan Papa will entertain you [*She calls to the Captain in the pantry*] Papa come and explain the house to Mr Mangan

She goes out with Ellie The Captain comes from the pantry

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You're going to marry Dunn's daughter Dont You're too old

MANGAN [*staggered*] Well! That's fairly blunt, Captain

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It's true

MANGAN She doesn't think so

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER She does

MANGAN Older men than I have—

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*finishing the sentence for him*]—made fools of themselves That, also, is true

MANGAN [*asserting himself*] I dont see that this is any business of yours

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It is everybody's business The stars in their courses are shaken when such things happen

MANGAN I'm going to marry her all the same

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER How do you know?

MANGAN [*playing the strong man*] I intend to I mean to See? I never made up my mind to do a thing yet that I didnt bring it off That's the sort of man I am, and there will be a better understanding between us when you make up your mind to that, Captain

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You frequent picture palaces

MANGAN Perhaps I do Who told you?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Talk like a man, not like a mow You mean that you make a hundred thousand a year

MANGAN I dont boast But when I meet a man that makes a hundred thousand a year, I take off my hat to that man, and stretch out my hand to him and call him brother

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Then you also make a hundred thousand a year, hey?

MANGAN No I cant say that Fifty thousand, perhaps

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER His half brother only [*he turns away from Mangan with his usual abruptness, and collects the empty tea-cups on the Chinese tray*]

MANGAN [*irritated*] See here, Captain Shotover I dont quite understand my position here. I came here on your daughter's invitation Am I in her house or in yours?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You are beneath the dome of heaven, in the house of God. What is true within these walls is true outside them Go out on the seas, climb the mountains; wander through the valleys She is still too young

MANGAN [*weakening*] But I'm very little over fifty

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You are still less under sixty Boss Mangan you will not marry the pirate's child [*he carries the tray away into the pantry*]

MANGAN [*following him to the half door*] What pirate's child? What are you talking about?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*in the pantry*] Ellie Dunn You will not marry her.

MANGAN. Who will stop me?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*emerging*] My daughter [*he makes for the door leading to the hall*]

MANGAN [*following him*] Mrs Hushabye! Do you mean to say she brought me down here to break it off?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*stopping and turning on him*] I know nothing more than I have seen in her eye She will break it off Take my advice marry a West Indian negress they make excellent wives I was married to one myself for two years

MANGAN Well, I am damned!

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I thought so. I was, too, for many years The negress redeemed me

MANGAN [*feebly*] This is queer I ought to walk out of this house

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Why?

MANGAN Well, many men would be offended by your style of talking

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Nonsense! It's the other sort of talking that makes quarrels Nobody ever quarrels with me

A gentleman, whose first-rate tailoring and frictionless manners proclaim the wellbred West Ender, comes in from the hall He has an engaging air of being young and unmarried, but on close inspection is found to be at least over forty

THE GENTLEMAN Excuse my intruding in this fashion, but there is no knocker on the door, and the bell does not seem to ring

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Why should there be a knocker? Why should the bell ring? The door

is open.

THE GENTLEMAN Precisely So I ventured to come in

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Quite right. I will see about a room for you [*he makes for the door*]

THE GENTLEMAN [*stopping him*] But I'm afraid you dont know who I am

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Do you suppose that at my age I make distinctions between one fellowcreature and another? [*He goes out Mangan and the newcomer stare at one another*]

MANGAN Strange character, Captain Shotover, sir

THE GENTLEMAN Very

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*shouting outside*] Hesione: another person has arrived and wants a room Man about town, well dressed, fifty

THE GENTLEMAN Fancy Hesione's feelings! May I ask are you a member of the family?

MANGAN No

THE GENTLEMAN I am At least a connexion Mrs Hushabye comes back

MRS HUSHABYE How do you do? How good of you to come!

THE GENTLEMAN I am very glad indeed to make your acquaintance, Hesione. [*Instead of taking her hand he kisses her At the same moment the Captain appears in the doorway*]. You will excuse my kissing your daughter, Captain, when I tell you that—

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Stuff! Everyone kisses my daughter Kiss her as much as you like [*he makes for the pantry*]

THE GENTLEMAN Thank you One moment, Captain [*The Captain halts and turns. The gentleman goes to him affably*] Do you happen to remember—but probably you dont, as it occurred many years ago—that your younger daughter married a numskull

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Yes She said she'd marry anybody to get away from this house I should not have recognized you your head is no longer like a walnut Your aspect is softened You have been boiled in bread and milk for years and years, like other married men Poor devil! [*He disappears into the pantry*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*going past Mangan to the gentleman and scrutinizing him*] I dont believe you are Hastings Utterword

THE GENTLEMAN I am not

MRS HUSHABYE Then what business had you to kiss me?

THE GENTLEMAN I thought I would like to The fact is, I am Randall Utterword, the

unworthy younger brother of Hastings I was abroad diplomatizing when he was married

LADY UTTERWORD [*dashing in*] Hesione, where is the key of the wardrobe in my room? My diamonds are in my dressing-bag. I must lock it up—[*recognizing the stranger with a shock*] Randall how dare you? [*She marches at him past Mrs Hushabye, who retreats and joins Mangan near the sofa*]

RANDALL How dare I what? I am not doing anything

LADY UTTERWORD Who told you I was here?

RANDALL Hastings You had just left when I called on you at Claridge's, so I followed you down here You are looking extremely well.

LADY UTTERWORD Dont presume to tell me so

MRS HUSHABYE What is wrong with Mr Randall, Addy?

LADY UTTERWORD [*recollecting herself*] Oh, nothing But he has no right to come bothering you and papa without being invited [*she goes to the window-seat and sits down, turning away from them ill-humoredly and looking into the garden, where Hector and Ellie are now seen strolling together*]

MRS HUSHABYE I think you have not met Mr Mangan, Addy

LADY UTTERWORD [*turning her head and nodding coldly to Mangan*] I beg your pardon Randall you have flustered me so I made a perfect fool of myself

MRS HUSHABYE Lady Utterword My sister My younger sister

MANGAN [*bowing*] Pleased to meet you, Lady Utterword

LADY UTTERWORD [*with marked interest*] Who is that gentleman walking in the garden with Miss Dunn?

MRS HUSHABYE I dont know She quarrelled mortally with my husband only ten minutes ago, and I didn't know anyone else had come It must be a visitor [*She goes to the window to look*] Oh, it is Hector Theyve made it up

LADY UTTERWORD Your husband! That handsome man?

MRS HUSHABYE Well, why shouldnt my husband be a handsome man?

RANDALL [*joining them at the window*] One's husband never is, Ariadne [*he sits by Lady Utterword, on her right*]

MRS HUSHABYE One's sister's husband always is, Mr Randall

LADY UTTERWORD Dont be vulgar, Randall And you, Hesione, are just as bad

Ellie and Hector come in from the garden by the starboard door. Randall rises Ellie retires into the corner near the pantry Hector comes forward, and Lady Utterword rises looking her very best

MRS HUSHABYE Hector this is Addy

HECTOR [*apparently surprised*] Not this lady.

LADY UTTERWORD [*smiling*] Why not?

HECTOR [*looking at her with a piercing glance of deep but respectful admiration, his moustache bristling*] I thought—[*pulling himself together*] I beg your pardon, Lady Utterword I am extremely glad to welcome you at last under our roof [*he offers his hand with grave courtesy*]

MRS HUSHABYE She wants to be kissed, Hector

LADY UTTERWORD Hesione! [*but she still smiles*]

MRS HUSHABYE Call her Addy, and kiss her like a good brother-in-law, and have done with it [*She leaves them to themselves*]

HECTOR Behave yourself, Hesione Lady Utterword is entitled not only to hospitality but to civilization

LADY UTTERWORD [*gratefully*] Thank you, Hector [*They shake hands cordially*]

Mazzini Dunn is seen crossing the garden from starboard to port

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*coming from the pantry and addressing Ellie*] Your father has washed himself

ELLIE [*quite self-possessed*] He often does, Captain Shotover

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER A strange conversion! I saw him through the pantry window

Mazzini Dunn enters through the port window door, newly washed and brushed, and stops, smiling benevolently, between Mangan and Mrs Hushabye

MRS HUSHABYE [*introducing*] Mr Mazzini Dunn, Lady Ut—oh, I forgot youve met. [*Indicating Ellie*] Miss Dunn

MAZZINI [*walking across the room to take Ellie's hand, and beaming at his own naughty irony*] I have met Miss Dunn also She is my daughter [*He draws her arm through his caressingly*]

MRS HUSHABYE Of course how stupid! Mr Utterword, my sister's - er -

RANDALL [*shaking hands agreeably*] Her brother-in-law, Mr Dunn How do you do?

MRS HUSHABYE This is my husband.

HECTOR We have met, dear Dont intro-

duce us any more [*He moves away to the big chair, and adds*] Wont you sit down, Lady Utterword? [*She does so very graciously*].

MRS HUSHABYE Sorry I hate it it's like making people shew their tickets

MAZZINI [*sententiously*] How little it tells us, after all! The great question is, not who we are, but what we are

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Ha! What are you?

MAZZINI [*taken aback*] What am I?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER A thief, a pirate, and a murderer

MAZZINI. I assure you you are mistaken

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER An adventurous life, but what does it end in? Respectability A ladylike daughter The language and appearance of a city missionary Let it be a warning to all of you [*he goes out through the garden*]

DUNN. I hope nobody here believes that I am a thief, a pirate, or a murderer Mrs Hushabye will you excuse me a moment? I must really go and explain [*He follows the Captain*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*as he goes*] It's no use. Youd really better— [*but Dunn has vanished*] We had better all go out and look for some tea We never have regular tea; but you can always get some when you want the servants keep it stewing all day The kitchen veranda is the best place to ask May I shew you? [*She goes to the starboard door*]

RANDALL [*going with her*] Thank you, I dont think I'll take any tea this afternoon. But if you will shew me the garden—?

MRS HUSHABYE. Theres nothing to see in the garden except papa's observatory, and a gravel pit with a cave where he keeps dynamite and things of that sort However, its pleasanter out of doors; so come along

RANDALL Dynamite! Isnt that rather risky?

MRS HUSHABYE Well, we dont sit in the gravel pit when theres a thunderstorm

LADY UTTERWORD Thats something new. What is the dynamite for?

HECTOR To blow up the human race if it goes too far He is trying to discover a psychic ray that will explode all the explosives at the will of a Mahatma

ELLIE. The Captain's tea is delicious, Mr Utterword

MRS HUSHABYE [*stopping in the doorway*] Do you mean to say that youve had some of my father's tea? that you got round him before you were ten minutes in the house?

ELLIE I did

MRS HUSHABYE You little devil! [*She goes out with Randall*]

MANGAN. Wont you come, Miss Ellie?

ELLIE I'm too tired I'll take a book up to my room and rest a little [*She goes to the book-shelf*]

MANGAN Right You cant do better But I'm disappointed [*He follons Randall and Mrs Hushabye*].

Ellie, Hector, and Lady Utterword are left Hector is close to Lady Utterword They look at Ellie, waiting for her to go

ELLIE [*looking at the title of a book*] Do you like stories of adventure, Lady Utterword?

LADY UTTERWORD [*patronizingly*] Of course, dear

ELLIE Then I'll leave you to Mr Hushabye [*She goes out through the hall*]

HECTOR That girl is mad about tales of adventure The hes I have to tell her!

LADY UTTERWORD [*not interested in Ellie*] When you saw me what did you mean by saying that you thought, and then stopping short? What did you think?

HECTOR [*folding his arms and looking down at her magnetically*] May I tell you?

LADY UTTERWORD Of course

HECTOR It will not sound very civil. I was on the point of saying "I thought you were a plain woman "

LADY UTTERWORD Oh for shame, Hector! What right had you to notice whether I am plain or not?

HECTOR Listen to me, Ariadne Until today I have seen only photographs of you, and no photograph can give the strange fascination of the daughters of that supernatural old man There is some damnable quality in them that destroys men's moral sense, and carries them beyond honor and dishonor You know that, dont you?

LADY UTTERWORD Perhaps I do, Hector But let me warn you once for all that I am a rigidly conventional woman You may think because I'm a Shotover that I'm a Bohemian, because we are all so horribly Bohemian But I'm not I hate and loathe Bohemianism No child brought up in a strict Puritan household ever suffered from Puritanism as I suffered from our Bohemianism

HECTOR Our children are like that They spend their holidays in the houses of their respectable schoolfellows

LADY UTTERWORD. I shall invite them for

Christmas

HECTOR Their absence leaves us both without our natural chaperons

LADY UTTERWORD Children are certainly very inconvenient sometimes But intelligent people can always manage, unless they are Bohemians

HECTOR You are no Bohemian, but you are no Puritan either your attraction is alive and powerful What sort of woman do you count yourself?

LADY UTTERWORD I am a woman of the world, Hector, and I can assure you that if you will only take the trouble always to do the perfectly correct thing, and to say the perfectly correct thing, you can do just what you like An ill-conducted, careless woman gets simply no chance An ill-conducted, careless man is never allowed within arms length of any woman worth knowing

HECTOR I see You are neither a Bohemian woman nor a Puritan woman You are a dangerous woman

LADY UTTERWORD On the contrary, I am a safe woman

HECTOR You are a most accursedly attractive woman Mind I am not making love to you I do not like being attracted But you had better know how I feel if you are going to stay here

LADY UTTERWORD You are an exceedingly clever ladykiller, Hector And terribly handsome I am quite a good player, myself, at that game Is it quite understood that we are only playing?

HECTOR Quite I am deliberately playing the fool, out of sheer worthlessness

LADY UTTERWORD [*rising brightly*] Well, you are my brother-in-law Hesione asked you to kiss me [*He seizes her in his arms, and kisses her strenuously*] Oh! that was a little more than play, brother-in-law [*She pushes him suddenly away*] You shall not do that again

HECTOR In effect, you got your claws deeper into me than I intended

MRS HUSHABYE [*coming in from the garden*] Dont let me disturb you I only want a cap to put on daddiest The sun is setting, and he'll catch cold [*she makes for the door leading to the hall*]

LADY UTTERWORD Your husband is quite charming, darling He has actually condescended to kiss me at last I shall go into the garden it's cooler now [*she goes out by the port door*]

MRS HUSHABYE Take care, dear child I dont believe any man can kiss Addy without falling in love with her [*She goes into the hall*]

HECTOR [*striking himself on the chest*] Fool! Gont!

Mrs Hushabye comes back with the Captain's cap

HECTOR Your sister is an extremely enterprising old girl Wheres Miss Dunn!

MRS HUSHABYE Mangan says she has gone up to her room for a nap Addy wont let you talk to Ellie she has marked you for her own

HECTOR She has the diabolical family fascination I began making love to her automatically What am I to do? I cant fall in love, and I cant hurt a woman's feelings by telling her so when she falls in love with me And as women are always falling in love with my moustache I get landed in all sorts of tedious and terrifying flirtations in which I'm not a bit in earnest

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, neither is Addy She has never been in love in her life, though she has always been trying to fall in head over ears She is worse than you, because you had one real go at least, with me

HECTOR That was a confounded madness. I cant believe that such an amazing experience is common It has left its mark on me I believe that is why I have never been able to repeat it.

MRS HUSHABYE [*laughing and caressing his arm*] We were frightfully in love with one another, Hector It was such an enchanting dream that I have never been able to grudge it to you or anyone else since I have invited all sorts of pretty women to the house on the chance of giving you another turn But it has never come off

HECTOR I dont know that I want it to come off It was damned dangerous You fascinated me, but I loved you, so it was heaven This sister of yours fascinates me, but I hate her; so it is hell I shall kill her if she persists

MRS HUSHABYE Nothing will kill Addy she is as strong as a horse [*Releasing him*] Now I am going off to fascinate somebody

HECTOR The Foreign Office toff? Randall?

MRS HUSHABYE Goodness gracious, no! Why should I fascinate him?

HECTOR I presume you dont mean the bloated capitalist, Mangan?

MRS HUSHABYE Hm! I think he had better be fascinated by me than by Ellie [*She is going into the garden when the Captain comes in*]

from it with some sticks in his hand] What have you got there, daddiest?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Dynamite

MRS HUSHABYE You've been to the gravel pit. Don't drop it about the house. There's a dear [*She goes into the garden, where the evening light is now very red*]

HECTOR Listen, O sage. How long dare you concentrate on a feeling without risking having it fixed in your consciousness all the rest of your life?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Ninety minutes. An hour and a half [*He goes into the pantry*]

Hector, left alone, contracts his brows, and falls into a day-dream. He does not move for some time. Then he folds his arms. Then, throwing his hands behind him, and gripping one with the other, he strides tragically once to and fro. Suddenly he snatches his walking-stick from the teak table, and draws it, for it is a sword-stick. He fights a desperate duel with an imaginary antagonist, and after many vicissitudes runs him through the body up to the hilt. He sheathes his sword and throws it on the sofa, falling into another reverie as he does so. He looks straight into the eyes of an imaginary woman; seizes her by the arms; and says in a deep and thrilling tone "Do you love me!" The Captain comes out of the pantry at this moment, and Hector, caught with his arms stretched out and his fists clenched, has to account for his attitude by going through a series of gymnastic exercises.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. That sort of strength is no good. You will never be as strong as a gorilla.

HECTOR What is the dynamite for?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER To kill fellows like Mangan.

HECTOR No use. They will always be able to buy more dynamite than you.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I will make a dynamite that he cannot explode.

HECTOR. And that you can, eh?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Yes, when I have attained the seventh degree of concentration.

HECTOR What's the use of that? You never do attain it.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. What then is to be done? Are we to be kept for ever in the mud by these hogs to whom the universe is nothing but a machine for greasing their bristles and filling their snouts?

HECTOR. Are Mangan's bristles worse than Randall's lovelocks?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER We must win powers of

life and death over them both. I refuse to die until I have invented the means.

HECTOR. Who are we that we should judge them?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER What are they that they should judge us? Yet they do, unhesitatingly. There is enmity between our seed and their seed. They know it and act on it, strangling our souls. They believe in themselves. When we believe in ourselves, we shall kill them.

HECTOR. It is the same seed. You forget that your pirate has a very nice daughter. Mangan's son may be a Plato. Randall's a Shelley. What was my father?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. The damndest scoundrel I ever met [*He replaces the drawing-board, sits down at the table, and begins to mix a wash of color*]

HECTOR Precisely. Well, dare you kill his innocent grandchildren?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER They are mine also.

HECTOR Just so. We are members one of another. [*He throws himself carelessly on the sofa*] I tell you I have often thought of this killing of human vermin. Many men have thought of it. Decent men are like Daniel in the lion's den: their survival is a miracle, and they do not always survive. We live among the Mangans and Randalls and Billie Dunns as they, poor devils, live among the disease germs and the doctors and the lawyers and the parsons and the restaurant chefs and the tradesmen and the servants and all the rest of the parasites and blackmailers. What are our terrors to theirs? Give me the power to kill them, and I'll spare them in sheer—

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*cutting in sharply*] Fellow feeling?

HECTOR No. I should kill myself if I believed that. I must believe that my spark, small as it is, is divine, and that the red light over their door is hell fire. I should spare them in simple magnanimous pity.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You can't spare them until you have the power to kill them. At present they have the power to kill you. There are millions of blacks over the water for them to train and let loose on us. They're going to do it. They're doing it already.

HECTOR They are too stupid to use their power.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*throning down his brush and coming to the end of the sofa*] Do not deceive yourself: they do use it. We kill the better half of ourselves every day to propitiate

them. The knowledge that these people are there to render all our aspirations barren prevents us having the aspirations. And when we are tempted to seek their destruction they bring forth demons to delude us, disguised as pretty daughters, and singers and poets and the like, for whose sake we spare them

HECTOR [*sitting up and leaning towards him*] May not Hesione be such a demon, brought forth by you lest I should slay you?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER That is possible She has used you up, and left you nothing but dreams, as some women do

HECTOR. Vampire women, demon women

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Men think the world well lost for them, and lose it accordingly Who are the men that do things? The husbands of the shrew and of the drunkard, the men with the thorn in the flesh [*Walking distractedly away towards the pantry*] I must think these things out [*Turning suddenly*] But I go on with the dynamite none the less I will discover a ray mightier than any X-ray a mind ray that will explode the ammunition in the belt of my adversary before he can point his gun at me And I must hurry I am old I have no time to waste in talk [*he is about to go into the pantry, and Hector is making for the hall, when Hesione comes back*]

MRS HUSHABYE Daddiest you and Hector must come and help me to entertain all these people What on earth were you shouting about?

HECTOR [*stopping in the act of turning the doorhandle*] He is madder than usual

MRS HUSHABYE We all are

HECTOR I must change [*he resumes his door opening*]

MRS HUSHABYE Stop, stop Come back, both of you Come back [*They return, reluctantly*] Money is running short

HECTOR. Money! Where are my April dividends?

MRS HUSHABYE Where is the snow that fell last year?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Where is all the money you had for that patent lifeboat I invented?

MRS HUSHABYE Five hundred pounds, and I have made it last since Easter!

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Since Easter! Barely four months! Monstrous extravagance! I could live for seven years on £500.

MRS HUSHABYE Not keeping open house as we do here, daddiest

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Only £500 for that lifeboat! I got twelve thousand for the invention before that

MRS HUSHABYE Yes, dear, but that was for the ship with the magnetic keel that sucked up submarines Living at the rate we do, you cannot afford life-saving inventions Can't you think of something that will murder half Europe at one bang?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No I am ageing fast My mind does not dwell on slaughter as it did when I was a boy Why doesn't your husband invent something? He does nothing but tell lies to women

HECTOR Well, that is a form of invention, is it not? However, you are right I ought to support my wife

MRS HUSHABYE Indeed you shall do nothing of the sort I should never see you from breakfast to dinner I want my husband

HECTOR [*bitterly*] I might as well be your lapdog

MRS HUSHABYE Do you want to be my breadwinner, like the other poor husbands?

HECTOR No, by thunder! What a damned creature a husband is anyhow!

MRS HUSHABYE [*to the Captain*] What about that harpoon cannon?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No use It kills whales, not men

MRS HUSHABYE Why not? You fire the harpoon out of a cannon It sticks in the enemy's general, you wind him in, and there you are

HECTOR You are your father's daughter, Hesione

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER There is something in it Not to wind in generals they are not dangerous But one could fire a grapnel and wind in a machine gun or even a tank I will think it out

MRS HUSHABYE [*squeezing the Captain's arm affectionately*] Saved! You are a darling, daddiest. Now we must go back to these dreadful people and entertain them

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER They have had no dinner Don't forget that

HECTOR Neither have I And it is dark it must be all hours

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, Guinness will produce some sort of dinner for them The servants always take jolly good care that there is food in the house

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*raising a strange wail in the darkness*] What a house! What a daughter!

MRS HUSHABYE [*raving*] What a father!

HECTOR [*following suit*] What a husband!

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Is there no thunder in heaven?

HECTOR Is there no beauty, no bravery, on earth?

MRS HUSHABYE What do men want? They have their food, their firesides, their clothes mended, and our love at the end of the day. Why are they not satisfied? Why do they envy us the pain with which we bring them into the world, and make strange dangers and torments for themselves to be even with us?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*weirdly chanting*]
I builded a house for my daughters, and
opened the doors thereof,
That men might come for their choosing, and
their betters spring from their love;
But one of them married a numskull,

HECTOR [*taking up the rhythm*]

The other a har wed;

MRS HUSHABYE [*completing the stanza*]
And now must she lie beside him, even as
she made her bed

LADY UTTERWORD [*calling from the garden*]
Hesione! Hesione! Where are you?

HECTOR The cat is on the tiles

MRS HUSHABYE Coming, darling, coming
[*she goes quickly into the garden*]

The Captain goes back to his place at the table.

HECTOR [*going into the hall*] Shall I turn up
the lights for you?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. No Give me deeper
darkness. Money is not made in the light

ACT II

The same room, with the lights turned up and the curtains drawn. Ellie comes in, followed by Mangan. Both are dressed for dinner. She strolls to the drawing-table. He comes between the table and the wicker chair.

MANGAN What a dinner! I dont call it a dinner. I call it a meal

ELLIE I am accustomed to meals, Mr Mangan, and very lucky to get them. Besides, the captain cooked some maccaroni for me

MANGAN [*shuddering liverishly*] Too rich I cant eat such things. I suppose it's because I have to work so much with my brain. Thats the worst of being a man of business: you are always thinking, thinking, thinking. By the way, now that we are alone, may I

take the opportunity to come to a little understanding with you?

ELLIE [*settling into the draughtsman's seat*] Certainly I should like to

MANGAN [*taken aback*] Should you? That surprises me; for I thought I noticed this afternoon that you avoided me all you could. Not for the first time either

ELLIE I was very tired and upset. I wasn't used to the ways of this extraordinary house. Please forgive me

MANGAN Oh, thats all right. I dont mind. But Captain Shotover has been talking to me about you. You and me, you know

ELLIE [*interested*] The Captain! What did he say?

MANGAN Well, he noticed the difference between our ages

ELLIE He notices everything

MANGAN. You dont mind, then?

ELLIE Of course I know quite well that our engagement—

MANGAN Oh! you call it an engagement

ELLIE. Well, isnt it?

MANGAN Oh, yes, yes, no doubt it is if you hold to it. This is the first time youve used the word, and I didnt quite know where we stood. thats all [*He sits down in the wicker chair; and resigns himself to allow her to lead the conversation*] You were saying—?

ELLIE Was I? I forget. Tell me. Do you like this part of the country? I heard you ask Mr Hushabye at dinner whether there are any nice houses to let down here

MANGAN. I like the place. The air suits me. I shouldnt be surprised if I settled down here

ELLIE Nothing would please me better. The air suits me too. And I want to be near Hesione

MANGAN [*with growing uneasiness*] The air may suit us, but the question is, should we suit one another? Have you thought about that?

ELLIE Mr Mangan, we must be sensible, mustnt we? It's no use pretending that we are Romeo and Juliet. But we can get on very well together if we choose to make the best of it. Your kindness of heart will make it easy for me.

MANGAN [*leaning forward, with the beginning of something like deliberate unpleasantness in his voice*] Kindness of heart, eh? I ruined your father, didnt I?

ELLIE. Oh, not intentionally.

MANGAN. Yes I did. Ruined him on purpose.

ELLIE On purpose!

MANGAN Not out of ill-nature, you know And you'll admit that I kept a job for him when I had finished with him But business is business, and I ruined him as a matter of business

ELLIE I dont understand how that can be Are you trying to make me feel that I need not be grateful to you, so that I may choose freely?

MANGAN [*rising aggressively*] No I mean what I say

ELLIE But how could it possibly do you any good to ruin my father? The money he lost was yours

MANGAN [*with a sour laugh*] Was mine! It is mine, Miss Ellie, and all the money the other fellows lost too [*He shoves his hands into his pockets and shews his teeth*] I just smoked them out like a hive of bees What do you say to that? A bit of a shock, eh?

ELLIE It would have been, this morning Now! you cant think how little it matters But it's quite interesting Only, you must explain it to me I dont understand it [*Propping her elbows on the drawing-board and her chin on her hands, she composes herself to listen with a combination of conscious curiosity with unconscious contempt which provokes him to more and more unpleasantness, and an attempt at patronage of her ignorance*]

MANGAN Of course you dont understand what do you know about business? You just listen and learn Your father's business was a new business, and I dont start new businesses I let other fellows start them They put all their money and their friends' money into starting them They wear out their souls and bodies trying to make a success of them Theyre what you call enthusiasts But the first dead lift of the thing is too much for them, and they havnt enough financial experience In a year or so they have either to let the whole show go bust, or sell out to a new lot of fellows for a few deferred ordinary shares that is, if theyre lucky enough to get anything at all As likely as not the very same thing happens to the new lot They put in more money and a couple of years more work, and then perhaps they have to sell out to a third lot If it's really a big thing the third lot will have to sell out too, and leave their work and their money behind them And thats where the real business man comes in where I come in

But I'm cleverer than some I dont mind dropping a little money to start the process I took your father's measure I saw that he had a sound idea, and that he would work himself silly for it if he got the chance I saw that he was a child in business, and was dead certain to outrun his expenses and be in too great a hurry to wait for his market I knew that the surest way to ruin a man who doesnt know how to handle money is to give him some I explained my idea to some friends in the city, and they found the money, for I take no risks in ideas, even when theyre my own Your father, and the friends that ventured their money with him were no more to me than a heap of squeezed lemons Youve been wasting your gratitude my kind heart is all rot I'm sick of it When I see your father beaming at me with his moist, grateful eyes, regularly wallowing in gratitude, I sometimes feel I must tell him the truth or burst What stops me is that I know he wouldnt believe me He'd think it was my modesty, as you did just now He'd think anything rather than the truth, which is that he's a blamed fool, and I am a man that knows how to take care of himself [*He throws himself back into the big chair with large self-approval*] Now what do you think of me, Miss Ellie?

ELLIE [*dropping her hands*] How strange! that my mother, who knew nothing at all about business, should have been quite right about you! She always said—not before papa, of course, but to us children—that you were just that sort of man

MANGAN [*sitting up, much hurt*] Oh! did she? And yet she'd have let you marry me

ELLIE Well, you see, Mr Mangan, my mother married a very good man—for whatever you may think of my father as a man of business, he is the soul of goodness—and she is not at all keen on my doing the same

MANGAN Anyhow, you dont want to marry me now, do you?

ELLIE [*very calmly*] Oh, I think so Why not?

MANGAN [*rising aghast*] Why not!

ELLIE I dont see why we shouldnt get on very well together

MANGAN Well, but look here, you know—
[*he stops, quite at a loss*]

ELLIE [*patently*] Well?

MANGAN Well, I thought you were rather particular about people's characters

ELLIE If we women were particular about

men's characters, we should never get married at all, Mr Mangan

MANGAN A child like you talking of "we women"! What next! You're not in earnest?

ELLIE Yes I am Arnt you?

MANGAN You mean to hold me to it?

ELLIE Do you wish to back out of it?

MANGAN Oh no Not exactly back out of it.

ELLIE Well?

He has nothing to say With a long whispered whistle, he drops into the wicker chair and stares before him like a beggared gambler But a cunning look soon comes into his face He leans over towards her on his right elbow, and speaks in a low steady voice

MANGAN Suppose I told you I was in love with another woman!

ELLIE [*echoing him*] Suppose I told you I was in love with another man!

MANGAN [*bouncing angrily out of his chair*] I'm not joking.

ELLIE Who told you I was?

MANGAN I tell you I'm serious You're too young to be serious; but you'll have to believe me I want to be near your friend Mrs Hushabye I'm in love with her Now the murder's out

ELLIE I want to be near your friend Mr Hushabye. I'm in love with him [*She rises and adds with a frank air*] Now we are in one another's confidence, we shall be real friends Thank you for telling me

MANGAN [*almost beside himself*] Do you think I'll be made a convenience of like this?

ELLIE. Come, Mr Mangan! you made a business convenience of my father. Well, a woman's business is marriage Why shouldn't I make a domestic convenience of you?

MANGAN Because I don't choose, see? Because I'm not a silly gull like your father That's why

ELLIE [*with serene contempt*] You are not good enough to clean my father's boots, Mr Mangan, and I am paying you a great compliment in condescending to make a convenience of you, as you call it Of course you are free to throw over our engagement if you like; but, if you do, you'll never enter Hesione's house again I will take care of that

MANGAN [*gasping*] You little devil, you've done me [*On the point of collapsing into the big chair again he recovers himself*] Wait a bit, though; you're not so cute as you think. You can't beat Boss Mangan as easy as that.

Suppose I go straight to Mrs Hushabye and tell her that you're in love with her husband.

ELLIE She knows it

MANGAN You told her!!!

ELLIE She told me

MANGAN [*clutching at his bursting temples*] Oh, this is a crazy house Or else I'm going clean off my chump Is she making a swop with you—she to have your husband and you to have hers?

ELLIE Well, you don't want us both, do you?

MANGAN [*throwing himself into the chair distractedly*] My brain won't stand it. My head's going to split Help! Help me to hold it. Quick hold it squeeze it Save me [*Ellie comes behind his chair, clasps his head hard for a moment, then begins to draw her hands from his forehead back to his ears*] Thank you [*Drowsily*] That's very refreshing [*Waking a little*] Don't you hypnotize me, though I've seen men made fools of by hypnotism

ELLIE [*steadily*] Be quiet. I've seen men made fools of without hypnotism

MANGAN [*humbly*] You don't dislike touching me, I hope You never touched me before, I noticed.

ELLIE. Not since you fell in love naturally with a grown-up nice woman, who will never expect you to make love to her And I will never expect him to make love to me.

MANGAN He may, though

ELLIE [*making her passes rhythmically*] Hush Go to sleep Do you hear? You are to go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep; be quiet, deeply deeply quiet, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep

He falls asleep Ellie steals away, turns the light out, and goes into the garden

Nurse Guinness opens the door and is seen in the light which comes in from the hall

GUINNESS [*speaking to someone outside*] Mr Mangan's not here, ducky there's no one here It's all dark

MRS HUSHABYE [*without*] Try the garden. Mr Dunn and I will be in my boudoir Shew him the way

GUINNESS Yes, ducky [*She makes for the garden door in the dark, stumbles over the sleeping Mangan, and screams*] Ahoo! Oh Lord, sir! I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I didn't see you in the dark. Who is it? [*She goes back to the door and turns on the light*] Oh, Mr Mangan, sir, I hope I haven't hurt you plumping into your lap like that [*Coming to him*] I was

looking for you, sir Mrs Hushabye says will
that he remains quite
 Lord, I hope I havnt
 killed him Sir! Mr Mangan! Sir! [*She shakes*
him, and he is rolling inertly off the chair on
the floor when she holds him up and props him
against the cushion] Miss Hussy! Miss Hussy!
 Quick, doty darling Miss Hussy! [*Mrs Husha-*
bye comes in from the hall, followed by Mazzini
Dunn] Oh, Miss Hussy, I've been and killed
 him

Mazzini runs round the back of the chair to
Mangan's right hand, and sees that the nurse's
words are apparently only too true

MAZZINI What tempted you to commit
 such a crime, woman?

MRS HUSHABYE [*trying not to laugh*] Do you
 mean you did it on purpose?

GUINNESS Now is it likely I'd kill any man
 on purpose I fell over him in the dark, and
 I'm a pretty tidy weight He never spoke
 nor moved until I shook him, and then he
 would have dropped dead on the floor Isnt
 it tiresome?

MRS HUSHABYE [*going past the nurse to*
Mangan's side, and inspecting him less credu-
lously than Mazzini] Nonsense! he is not dead
 he is only asleep I can see him breathing

GUINNESS But why wont he wake?

MAZZINI [*speaking very politely into Mangan's*
ear] Mangan! My dear Mangan! [*he blows*
into Mangan's ear]

MRS HUSHABYE Thats no good [*she shakes*
him vigorously] Mr Mangan wake up Do
 you hear? [*He begins to roll over*] Oh! Nurse,
 nurse he's falling help me

Nurse Guinness rushes to the rescue With
Mazzini's assistance, Mangan is propped safely
up again

GUINNESS [*behind the chair, bending over to*
test the case with her nose] Would he be drunk,
 do you think, pet?

MRS HUSHABYE Had he any of papa's rum?

MAZZINI It cant be that he is most ab-
 stemious I am afraid he drank too much
 formerly, and has to drink too little now
 You know, Mrs Hushabye, I really think
 he has been hypnotized

GUINNESS Hip no what, sir?

MAZZINI One evening at home, after we
 had seen a hypnotizing performance, the
 children began playing at it, and Ellie
 stroked my head. I assure you I went off dead
 asleep, and they had to send for a profes-
 sional to wake me up after I had slept eigh-

teen hours They had to carry me upstairs,
 and as the poor children were not very strong,
 they let me slip, and I rolled right down the
 whole flight and never woke up [*Mrs Husha-*
bye splutters] Oh, you may laugh, Mrs Husha-
 bye, but I might have been killed

MRS HUSHABYE I couldnt have helped
 laughing even if you had been, Mr Dunn
 So Ellie has hypnotized him What fun!

MAZZINI Oh no, no, no It was such a terrible
 lesson to her nothing would induce her to
 try such a thing again

MRS HUSHABYE Then who did it? I didnt

MAZZINI I thought perhaps the Captain
 might have done it unintentionally He is so
 fearfully magnetic I feel vibrations whenever
 he comes close to me.

GUINNESS The Captain will get him out of
 it anyhow, sir I'll back him for that I'll go
 fetch him [*she makes for the pantry*]

MRS HUSHABYE Wait a bit [*To Mazzini*]
 You say he is all right for eighteen hours?

MAZZINI Well, I was asleep for eighteen
 hours

MRS HUSHABYE Were you any the worse
 for it?

MAZZINI I dont quite remember They
 had poured brandy down my throat, you see,
 and—

MRS HUSHABYE Quite Anyhow, you sur-
 vived Nurse, darling go and ask Miss Dunn
 to come to us here Say I want to speak to
 her particularly You will find her with Mr
 Hushabye probably

GUINNESS I think not, ducky Miss Addy is
 with him But I'll find her and send her to
 you [*She goes out into the garden*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*calling Mazzini's attention*
to the figure on the chair] Now, Mr Dunn, look
 Just look. Look hard Do you still intend to
 sacrifice your daughter to that thing?

MAZZINI [*troubled*] You have completely
 upset me, Mrs Hushabye, by all you have
 said to me That anyone could imagine that
 I—I, a consecrated soldier of freedom, if I
 may say so—could sacrifice Ellie to anybody
 or anyone, or that I should ever have dreamed
 of forcing her inclinations in any way, is a
 most painful blow to my—well, I suppose
 you would say to my good opinion of myself

MRS HUSHABYE [*rather stolidly*] Sorry

MAZZINI [*looking forlornly at the body*] What
 is your objection to poor Mangan, Mrs
 Hushabye? He looks all right to me But
 then I am so accustomed to him

MRS HUSHABYE Have you no heart? Have you no sense? Look at the brute! Think of poor weak innocent Ellie in the clutches of this slavedriver, who spends his life making thousands of rough violent workmen bend to his will and sweat for him a man accustomed to have great masses of iron beaten into shape for him by steam-hammers! to fight with women and girls over a halfpenny an hour ruthlessly! a captain of industry, I think you call him, dont you? Are you going to fling your delicate, sweet, helpless child into such a beast's claws just because he will keep her in an expensive house and make her wear diamonds to shew how rich he is?

MAZZINI [*staring at her in wide-eyed amazement*] Bless you, dear Mrs Hushabye, what romantic ideas of business you have! Poor dear Mangan isnt a bit like that

MRS HUSHABYE [*scornfully*] Poor dear Mangan indeed!

MAZZINI But he doesnt know anything about machinery He never goes near the men he couldnt manage them he is afraid of them. I never can get him to take the least interest in the works he hardly knows more about them than you do People are cruelly unjust to Mangan they think he is all rugged strength just because his manners are bad

MRS HUSHABYE Do you mean to tell me he isnt strong enough to crush poor little Ellie?

MAZZINI Of course it's very hard to say how any marriage will turn out, but speaking for myself, I should say that he wont have a dog's chance against Ellie You know, Ellie has remarkable strength of character. I think it is because I taught her to like Shakespear when she was very young

MRS HUSHABYE [*contemptuously*] Shakespear! The next thing you will tell me is that you could have made a great deal more money than Mangan [*She retires to the sofa, and sits down at the port end of it in the worst of humors*]

MAZZINI [*following her and taking the other end*] No I'm no good at making money I dont care enough for it, somehow I'm not ambitious! that must be it Mangan is wonderful about money he thinks of nothing else He is so dreadfully afraid of being poor I am always thinking of other things: even at the works I think of the things we are doing and not of what they cost And the worst of it is, poor Mangan doesnt know what to do with his money when he gets it He is such a baby

that he doesnt know even what to eat and drink. he has ruined his liver eating and drinking the wrong things, and now he can hardly eat at all Ellie will diet him splendidly. You will be surprised when you come to know him better: he is really the most helpless of mortals You get quite a protective feeling towards him

MRS HUSHABYE Then who manages his business, pray?

MAZZINI I do And of course other people like me

MRS HUSHABYE Footling people, you mean

MAZZINI I suppose youd think us so

MRS HUSHABYE And pray why dont you do without him if youre all so much cleverer?

MAZZINI Oh, we couldnt we should ruin the business in a year I've tried and I know. We should spend too much on everything We should improve the quality of the goods and make them too dear We should be sentimental about the hard cases among the workpeople But Mangan keeps us in order He is down on us about every extra halfpenny We could never do without him You see, he will sit up all night thinking of how to save sixpence Wont Ellie make him jump, though, when she takes his house in hand!

MRS HUSHABYE Then the creature is a fraud even as a captain of industry!

MAZZINI I am afraid all the captains of industry are what you call frauds, Mrs Hushabye Of course there are some manufacturers who really do understand their own works, but they dont make as high a rate of profit as Mangan does I assure you Mangan is quite a good fellow in his way He means well

MRS HUSHABYE He doesnt look well He is not in his first youth, is he?

MAZZINI After all, no husband is in his first youth for very long, Mrs Hushabye. And men cant afford to marry in their first youth nowadays

MRS HUSHABYE Now if I said that, it would sound witty Why cant you say it wittily? What on earth is the matter with you? Why dont you inspire everybody with confidence? with respect?

MAZZINI [*humbly*] I think that what is the matter with me is that I am poor You dont know what that means at home. Mind I dont say they have ever complained Theyve all been wonderful: theyve been proud of my poverty Theyve even joked about it quite often. But my wife has had a very poor time

of it. She has been quite resigned—

MRS HUSBANDY [*shuddering involuntarily*]!

MAZZINI. There! You see, Mrs Hushabye. I dont want Ellie to live on resignation.

MRS HUSBANDY. Do you want her to have to resign herself to living with a man she doesnt love?

MAZZINI [*hastily*]. Are you sure that would be worse than living with a man she did love, if he was a fooling person?

MRS HUSBANDY [*relaxing her contemptuous attitude, quite interested in Mazzini now*]. You know, I really think you must love Ellie very much, for you become quite clever when you talk about her.

MAZZINI. I didnt know I was so very stupid on other subjects.

MRS HUSBANDY. You are, sometimes.

MAZZINI [*turning his head away, for his eyes are red*]. I have learnt a good deal about myself from you, Mrs Hushabye, and I'm afraid I shall not be the happier for your plain speaking. But if you thought I needed it to make me think of Ellie's happiness you were very much mistaken.

MRS HUSBANDY [*leaning towards him kindly*]. Have I been a beast?

MAZZINI [*pulling himself together*]. It doesnt matter about me, Mrs Hushabye. I think you like Ellie, and that is enough for me.

MRS HUSBANDY. I'm beginning to like you a little. I perfectly loathed you at first. I thought you the most odious, self-satisfied, boring elderly prig I ever met.

MAZZINI [*resigned, and now quite cheerful*]. I daresay I am all that. I never have been a favorite with gorgeous women like you. They always frighten me.

MRS HUSBANDY [*pleased*]. Am I a gorgeous woman, Mazzini? I shall fall in love with you presently.

MAZZINI [*with placid gallantry*]. No you wont, Hesione. But you would be quite safe. Would you believe it that quite a lot of women have flirted with me because I am quite safe? But they get tired of me for the same reason.

MRS HUSBANDY [*mischievously*]. Take care. You may not be so safe as you think.

MAZZINI. Oh yes, quite safe. You see, I have been in love really the sort of love that only happens once [*Softly*]. Thats why Ellie is such a lovely girl.

MRS HUSBANDY. Well, really, you are coming out. Are you quite sure you wont let me tempt you into a second grand passion?

MAZZINI. Quite. It wouldnt be natural. The fact is, you dont strike on my box, Mrs Hushabye, and I certainly dont strike on yours.

MRS HUSBANDY. I see. Your marriage was a safety match.

MAZZINI. What a very witty application of the expression I used! I should never have thought of it.

Ellie comes in from the garden, looking anything but happy.

MRS HUSBANDY [*rising*]. Oh! here is Ellie at last [*She goes behind the sofa*].

ELLIE [*on the threshold of the starboard door*]. Guinness said you wanted me. You and papa.

MRS HUSBANDY. You have kept us waiting so long that it almost came to—well, never mind. Your father is a very wonderful man [*she ruffles his hair affectionately*], the only one I ever met who could resist me when I made myself really agreeable [*She comes to the big chair, on Mangan's left*]. Come here. I have something to shew you [*Ellie strolls listlessly to the other side of the chair*]. Look.

ELLIE [*contemplating Mangan without interest*]. I know. He is only asleep. We had a talk after dinner; and he fell asleep in the middle of it.

MRS HUSBANDY. You did it, Ellie. You put him asleep.

MAZZINI [*rising quickly and coming to the back of the chair*]. Oh, I hope not. Did you, Ellie?

ELLIE [*wearily*]. He asked me to.

MAZZINI. But it's dangerous. You know what happened to me.

ELLIE [*utterly indifferent*]. Oh, I daresay I can wake him. If not, somebody else can.

MRS HUSBANDY. It doesnt matter, anyhow, because I have at last persuaded your father that you dont want to marry him.

ELLIE [*suddenly coming out of her listlessness, much vexed*]. But why did you do that, Hesione? I do want to marry him. I fully intend to marry him.

MAZZINI. Are you quite sure, Ellie? Mrs Hushabye has made me feel that I may have been thoughtless and selfish about it.

ELLIE [*very clearly and steadily*]. Papa. When Mrs Hushabye takes it on herself to explain to you what I think or dont think, shut your ears tight, and shut your eyes too. Hesione knows nothing about me: she hasnt the least notion of the sort of person I am, and never will. I promise you I wont do anything I dont

want to do and mean to do for my own sake

MAZZINI You are quite, quite sure?

ELLIE Quite, quite sure Now you must go away and leave me to talk to Mrs Hushabye

MAZZINI But I should like to hear Shall I be in the way?

ELLIE [*inexorable*] I had rather talk to her alone

MAZZINI [*affectionately*] Oh, well, I know what a nuisance parents are, dear I will be good and go [*He goes to the garden door*] By the way, do you remember the address of that professional who woke me up? Dont you think I had better telegraph to him

MRS HUSHABYE [*moving towards the sofa*] It's too late to telegraph tonight.

MAZZINI I suppose so I do hope he'll wake up in the course of the night [*He goes out into the garden*]

ELLIE [*turning vigorously on Hesione the moment her father is out of the room*] Hesione what the devil do you mean by making mischief with my father about Mangan?

MRS HUSHABYE [*promptly losing her temper*] Dont you dare speak to me like that, you little minx Remember that you are in my house

ELLIE Stuff! Why dont you mind your own business? What is it to you whether I choose to marry Mangan or not?

MRS HUSHABYE Do you suppose you can bully me, you miserable little matrimonial adventurer?

ELLIE Every woman who hasnt any money is a matrimonial adventurer It's easy for you to talk you have never known what it is to want money; and you can pick up men as if they were daisies I am poor and respectable—

MRS HUSHABYE [*interrupting*] Ho! respectable! How did you pick up Mangan? How did you pick up my husband? You have the audacity to tell me that I am a—a—a—

ELLIE A siren So you are. You were born to lead men by the nose. if you werent, Marcus would have waited for me, perhaps

MRS HUSHABYE [*suddenly melting and half laughing*] Oh, my poor Ellie, my pettikins, my unhappy darling! I am so sorry about Hector. But what can I do? It's not my fault I'd give him to you if I could.

ELLIE I dont blame you for that.

MRS HUSHABYE What a brute I was to quarrel with you and call you names! Do kiss me and say youre not angry with me.

ELLIE [*fiercely*] Oh, dont slop and gush and be sentimental Dont you see that unless I can be hard—as hard as nails—I shall go mad I dont care a damn about your calling me names do you think a woman in my situation can feel a few hard words?

MRS HUSHABYE Poor little woman! Poor little situation!

ELLIE I suppose you think youre being sympathetic You are just foolish and stupid and selfish You see me getting a smasher right in the face that kills a whole part of my life the best part that can never come again; and you think you can help me over it by a little coaxing and kissing When I want all the strength I can get to lean on something iron, something stony, I dont care how cruel it is, you go all mushy and want to slobber over me I'm not angry, I'm not unfriendly; but for God's sake do pull yourself together; and dont think that because youre on velvet and always have been, women who are in hell can take it as easily as you

MRS HUSHABYE [*shrugging her shoulders*] Very well [*She sits down on the sofa in her old place*] But I warn you that when I am neither coaxing and kissing nor laughing, I am just wondering how much longer I can stand living in this cruel, damnable world You object to the siren well, I drop the siren You want to rest your wounded bosom against a grindstone. Well [*folding her arms*], here is the grindstone

ELLIE [*sitting down beside her, appeased*] Thats better you really have the trick of falling in with everyone's mood, but you dont understand, because you are not the sort of woman for whom there is only one man and only one chance

MRS HUSHABYE I certainly dont understand how your marrying that object [*indicating Mangan*] will console you for not being able to marry Hector

ELLIE Perhaps you dont understand why I was quite a nice girl this morning, and am now neither a girl nor particularly nice

MRS HUSHABYE Oh yes I do It's because you have made up your mind to do something despicable and wicked

ELLIE I dont think so, Hesione I must make the best of my ruined house

MRS HUSHABYE Pooh! Youll get over it Your house isnt ruined

ELLIE Of course I shall get over it You dont suppose I'm going to sit down and die

of a broken heart, I hope, or be an old maid living on a pittance from the Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers' Association. But my heart is broken, all the same. What I mean by that is that I know that what has happened to me with Marcus will not happen to me ever again. In the world for me there is Marcus and a lot of other men of whom one is just the same as another. Well, if I can't have love, that's no reason why I should have poverty. If Mangan has nothing else, he has money.

MRS HUSHABYE And are there no young men with money?

ELLIE Not within my reach. Besides, a young man would have the right to expect love from me, and would perhaps leave me when he found I could not give it to him. Rich young men can get rid of their wives, you know, pretty cheaply. But this object, as you call him, can expect nothing more from me than I am prepared to give him.

MRS HUSHABYE He will be your owner, remember. If he buys you, he will make the bargain pay him and not you. Ask your father.

ELLIE [*rising and strolling to the chair to contemplate their subject*] You need not trouble on that score, Hesione. I have more to give Boss Mangan than he has to give me. It is I who am buying him, and at a pretty good price too, I think. Women are better at that sort of bargain than men. I have taken the Boss's measure, and ten Boss Mangans shall not prevent me doing far more as I please as his wife than I have ever been able to do as a poor girl. [*Stooping to the recumbent figure*] Shall they, Boss? I think not. [*She passes on to the drawing-table, and leans against the end of it, facing the windows*] I shall not have to spend most of my time wondering how long my gloves will last, anyhow.

MRS HUSHABYE [*rising superbly*] Ellie, you are a wicked sordid little beast. And to think that I actually condescended to fascinate that creature there to save you from him! Well, let me tell you this: if you make this disgusting match, you will never see Hector again if I can help it.

ELLIE [*unmoved*] I nailed Mangan by telling him that if he did not marry me he should never see you again. [*she lifts herself on her wrists and seats herself on the end of the table*]

MRS HUSHABYE [*recoiling*] Oh!

ELLIE. So you see I am not, unprepared

for your playing that trump against me. Well, you just try it. That's all I should have made a man of Marcus, not a household pet.

MRS HUSHABYE [*flaming*] You dare!

ELLIE [*looking almost dangerous*] Set him thinking about me if you dare.

MRS HUSHABYE Well, of all the impudent little fiends I ever met! Hector says there is a certain point at which the only answer you can give to a man who breaks all the rules is to knock him down. What would you say if I were to box your ears?

ELLIE [*calmly*] I should pull your hair.

MRS HUSHABYE [*mischievously*] That wouldn't hurt me. Perhaps it comes off at night.

ELLIE [*so taken aback that she drops off the table and runs to her*] Oh, you don't mean to say, Hesione, that your beautiful black hair is false?

MRS HUSHABYE [*patting it*] Don't tell Hector. He believes in it.

ELLIE [*groaning*] Oh! Even the hair that ensnared him false! Everything false!

MRS HUSHABYE Pull it and try. Other women can snare men in their hair, but I can swing a baby on mine. Aha! you can't do that, Goldylocks.

ELLIE [*heartbroken*] No. You have stolen my babies.

MRS HUSHABYE Pettikins don't make me cry. You know, what you said about my making a household pet of him is a little true. Perhaps he ought to have waited for you. Would any other woman on earth forgive you?

ELLIE Oh, what right had you to take him all for yourself! [*Pulling herself together*] There! You couldn't help it. Neither of us could help it. He couldn't help it. No, don't say anything more. I can't bear it. Let us wake the object. [*She begins stroking Mangan's head, reversing the movement with which she put him to sleep*] Wake up, do you hear? You are to wake up at once. Wake up, wake up, wake—

MANGAN [*bouncing out of the chair in a fury and turning on them*] Wake up! So you think I've been asleep, do you? [*He kicks the chair violently back out of his way, and gets between them*] You throw me into a trance so that I can't move hand or foot—I might have been buried alive! It's a mercy I wasn't—and then you think I was only asleep. If you'd let me drop the two times you rolled me about, my nose would have been flattened for life against the floor. But I've found you all out,

anyhow I know the sort of people I'm among now. I've heard every word you've said, you and your precious father, and [to Mrs Hushabye] you too. So I'm an object, am I? I'm a thing, am I? I'm a fool that hasn't sense enough to feed myself properly, am I? I'm afraid of the men that would starve if it weren't for the wages I give them, am I? I'm nothing but a disgusting old skinflint to be made a convenience of by designing women and fool managers of my works, am I? I'm—

MRS HUSHABYE [*with the most elegant aplomb*] Sh-sh-sh-sh-sh! Mr Mangan, you are bound in honor to obliterate from your mind all you heard while you were pretending to be asleep. It was not meant for you to hear.

MANGAN Pretending to be asleep! Do you think if I was only pretending that I'd have sprawled there helpless, and listened to such unfairness, such lies, such injustice and plotting and backbiting and slandering of me, if I could have up and told you what I thought of you! I wonder I didn't burst.

MRS HUSHABYE [*sweetly*] You dreamt it all, Mr Mangan. We were only saying how beautifully peaceful you looked in your sleep. That was all, wasn't it, Ellie? Believe me, Mr Mangan, all those unpleasant things came into your mind in the last half second before you woke. Ellie rubbed your hair the wrong way, and the disagreeable sensation suggested a disagreeable dream.

MANGAN [*doggedly*] I believe in dreams.

MRS HUSHABYE So do I. But they go by contraries, don't they?

MANGAN [*depths of emotion suddenly welling up in him*] I shan't forget, to my dying day, that when you gave me the glad eye that time in the garden, you were making a fool of me. That was a dirty low mean thing to do. You had no right to let me come near you if I disgusted you. It isn't my fault if I'm old and haven't a moustache like a bronze candlestick as your husband has. There are things no decent woman would do to a man—like a man hitting a woman in the breast.

Hestone, utterly shamed, sits down on the sofa and covers her face with her hands. Mangan sits down also on his chair and begins to cry like a child. Ellie stares at them. Mrs Hushabye, at the distressing sound he makes, takes down her hands and looks at him. She rises and runs to him.

MRS HUSHABYE Don't cry. I can't bear it. Have I broken your heart? I didn't know you had one. How could I?

MANGAN I'm a man, ain't I?

MRS HUSHABYE [*half cooing, half rallying, altogether tenderly*] Oh no, not what I call a man. Only a Boss, just that and nothing else. What business has a Boss with a heart?

MANGAN Then you're not a bit sorry for what you did, nor ashamed?

MRS HUSHABYE I was ashamed for the first time in my life when you said that about hitting a woman in the breast, and I found out what I'd done. My very bones blushed red. You've had your revenge. Boss. Aren't you satisfied?

MANGAN Serve you right! Do you hear? Serve you right! You're just cruel. Cruel.

MRS HUSHABYE Yes, cruelty would be delicious if one could only find some sort of cruelty that didn't really hurt. By the way [*sitting down beside him on the arm of the chair*], what's your name? It's not really Boss, is it?

MANGAN [*shortly*] If you want to know, my name's Alfred.

MRS HUSHABYE [*springing up*] Alfred! Ellie, he was christened after Tennyson!

MANGAN [*rising*] I was christened after my uncle, and never had a penny from him, damn him! What of it?

MRS HUSHABYE It comes to me suddenly that you are a real person, that you had a mother, like anyone else [*Putting her hands on his shoulders and surveying him*]. Little Alf!

MANGAN Well, you have a nerve.

MRS HUSHABYE And you have a heart, Alf, a whimpering little heart, but a real one [*Releasing him suddenly*]. Now run and make it up with Ellie. She has had time to think what to say to you, which is more than I had [*she goes out quickly into the garden by the port door*].

MANGAN That woman has a pair of hands that go right through you.

ELLIE Still in love with her, in spite of all we said about you?

MANGAN Are all women like you two? Do they never think of anything about a man except what they can get out of him? You weren't even thinking that about me. You were only thinking whether your gloves would last.

ELLIE I shall not have to think about that when we are married.

MANGAN And you think I am going to marry you after what I heard there!

ELLIE You heard nothing from me that I did not tell you before.

MANGAN Perhaps you think I cant do without you

ELLIE I think you would feel lonely without us all now, after coming to know us so well

MANGAN [*with something like a yell of despair*] Am I never to have the last word?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*appearing at the starboard garden door*] There is a soul in torment here What is the matter?

MANGAN This girl doesnt want to spend her life wondering how long her gloves will last

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*passing through*] Dont wear any I never do [*he goes into the pantry*]

LADY UTTERWORD [*appearing at the port garden door, in a handsome dinner dress*] Is anything the matter?

ELLIE This gentleman wants to know is he never to have the last word?

LADY UTTERWORD [*coming forward to the sofa*] I should let him have it, my dear The important thing is not to have the last word, but to have your own way

MANGAN She wants both

LADY UTTERWORD She wont get them, Mr Mangan Providence always has the last word

MANGAN [*desperately*] Now you are going to come religion over me In this house a man's mind might as well be a football I'm going [*He makes for the hall, but is stopped by a hail from the Captain, who has just emerged from his pantry*]

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Whither away, Boss Mangan?

MANGAN To hell out of this house let that be enough for you and all here

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You were welcome to come you are free to go The wide earth, the high seas, the spacious skies are waiting for you outside

LADY UTTERWORD But your things, Mr Mangan Your bags, your comb and brushes, your pyjamas—

HECTOR [*who has just appeared in the port doorway in a handsome Arab costume*] Why should the escaping slave take his chains with him?

MANGAN Thats right, Hushabye Keep the pyjamas, my lady, and much good may they do you

HECTOR [*advancing to Lady Utterword's left hand*] Let us all go out into the night and leave everything behind us

MANGAN You stay where you are, the lot of you I want no company, especially female company

ELLIE Let him go He is unhappy here He is angry with us

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Go, Boss Mangan, and when you have found the land where there is happiness and where there are no women, send me its latitude and longitude, and I will join you there

LADY UTTERWORD You will certainly not be comfortable without your luggage, Mr Mangan

ELLIE [*impatient*] Go, go why dont you go? It is a heavenly night you can sleep on the heath Take my waterproof to lie on it is hanging up in the hall

HECTOR Breakfast at nine, unless you prefer to breakfast with the Captain at six

ELLIE Good night, Alfred

HECTOR Alfred! [*He runs back to the door and calls into the garden*] Randall Mangan's Christian name is Alfred

RANDALL [*appearing in the starboard doorway in evening dress*] Then Hesione wins her bet Mrs Hushabye appears in the port doorway She throws her left arm round Hector's neck, draws him with her to the back of the sofa, and throws her right arm round Lady Utterword's neck

MRS HUSHABYE They wouldnt believe me, Alf

They contemplate him

MANGAN Is there any more of you coming in to look at me, as if I was the latest thing in a menagerie

MRS HUSHABYE You are the latest thing in this menagerie

Before Mangan can retort, a fall of furniture is heard from upstairs, then a pistol shot, and a yell of pain The staring group breaks up in consternation

MAZZINI'S VOICE [*from above*] Help! A burglar! Help!

HECTOR [*his eyes blazing*] A burglar!!!

MRS HUSHABYE No, Hector youll be shot [*but it is too late he has dashed out past Mangan, who hastily moves towards the bookshelves out of his way*]

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*blowing his whistle*] All hands aloft! [*He strides out after Hector*]

LADY UTTERWORD My diamonds! [*She follows the Captain*]

RANDALL [*rushing after her*] No, Ariadne Let me

ELLIE Oh, is papa shot? [*she runs out*]

MRS HUSHABYE Are you frightened, Alf?

MANGAN No It aint my house, thank God

MRS HUSHABYE If they catch a burglar, shall we have to go into court as witnesses, and be asked all sorts of questions about our private lives?

MANGAN You wont be believed if you tell the truth

Mazzini, terribly upset, with a duelling pistol in his hand, comes from the hall, and makes his way to the drawing-table

MAZZINI. Oh, my dear Mrs Hushabye, I might have killed him [*He throws the pistol on the table and staggers round to the chair*] I hope you wont believe I really intended to

Hector comes in, marching an old and villainous looking man before him by the collar He plants him in the middle of the room and releases him

Ellie follows, and immediately runs across to the back of her father's chair, and pats his shoulders.

RANDALL [*entering with a poker*] Keep your eye on this door, Mangan I'll look after the other [*he goes to the starboard door and stands on guard there*]

Lady Utterword comes in after Randall, and goes between Mrs Hushabye and Mangan

Nurse Guinness brings up the rear, and waits near the door, on Mangan's left

MRS HUSHABYE What has happened?

MAZZINI Your housekeeper told me there was somebody upstairs, and gave me a pistol that Mr Hushabye had been practising with I thought it would frighten him; but it went off at a touch

THE BURGLAR Yes, and took the skin off my ear Precious near took the top off my head Why dont you have a proper revolver instead of a thing like that, that goes off if you as much as blow on it?

HECTOR One of my duelling pistols Sorry.

MAZZINI He put his hands up and said it was a fair cop

THE BURGLAR So it was Send for the police.

HECTOR No, by thunder! It was not a fair cop We were four to one

MRS HUSHABYE What will they do to him?

THE BURGLAR. Ten years Beginning with solitary. Ten years off my life. I shant serve it all I'm too old It will see me out

LADY UTTERWORD You should have thought of that before you stole my diamonds

THE BURGLAR Well, youve got them back,

lady havnt you? Can you give me back the years of my life you are going to take from me?

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, we cant bury a man alive for ten years for a few diamonds

THE BURGLAR Ten little shining diamonds! Ten long black years!

LADY UTTERWORD Think of what it is for us to be dragged through the horrors of a criminal court, and have all our family affairs in the papers! If you were a native, and Hastings could order you a good beating and send you away, I shouldnt mind, but here in England there is no real protection for any respectable person

THE BURGLAR. I'm too old to be giv a hiding, lady Send for the police and have done with it It's only just and right you should

RANDALL [*who has relaxed his vigilance on seeing the burglar so pacifically disposed, and comes forward swinging the poker between his fingers like a well-folded umbrella*] It is neither just nor right that we should be put to a lot of inconvenience to gratify your moral enthusiasm, my friend You had better get out, while you have the chance

THE BURGLAR [*inexorably*] No I must work my sin off my conscience This has come as a sort of call to me Let me spend the rest of my life repenting in a cell. I shall have my reward above.

MANGAN [*exasperated*] The very burglars cant behave naturally in this house

HECTOR My good sir you must work out your salvation at somebody else's expense. Nobody here is going to charge you

THE BURGLAR Oh, you wont charge me, wont you?

HECTOR No I'm sorry to be inhospitable; but will you kindly leave the house?

THE BURGLAR Right I'll go to the police station and give myself up. [*He turns resolutely to the door; but Hector stops him*]

HECTOR. } Oh no. You musnt do that

RANDALL. } No, no Clear out, man, cant you, and dont be a fool

MRS HUSHABYE } Dont be so silly. Cant you repent at home?

LADY UTTERWORD You will have to do as you are told.

THE BURGLAR It's compounding a felony, you know.

MRS HUSHABYE This is utterly ridiculous.

Are we to be forced to prosecute this man when we dont want to?

THE BURGLAR Am I to be robbed of my salvation to save you the trouble of spending a day at the sessions? Is that justice? Is it right? Is it fair to me?

MAZZINI [*rising and leaning across the table persuasively as if it were a pulpit desk or a shop counter*] Come, come! let me shew you how you can turn your very crimes to account. Why not set up as a locksmith? You must know more about locks than most honest men?

THE BURGLAR Thats true, sir. But I couldnt set up as a locksmith under twenty pounds.

RANDALL Well, you can easily steal twenty pounds. You will find it in the nearest bank.

THE BURGLAR [*horrified*] Oh what a thing for a gentleman to put into the head of a poor criminal scrambling out of the bottomless pit as it were! Oh, shame on you, sir! Oh, God forgive you! [*He throws himself into the big chair and covers his face as if in prayer*]

LADY UTTERWORD Really, Randall!

HECTOR It seems to me that we shall have to take up a collection for this inopportunist contrite sinner.

LADY UTTERWORD But twenty pounds is ridiculous.

THE BURGLAR [*looking up quickly*] I shall have to buy a lot of tools, lady.

LADY UTTERWORD Nonsense, you have your burgling kit.

THE BURGLAR Whats a jemmy and a centre-bit and an acetylene welding plant and a bunch of skeleton keys? I shall want a forge, and a smithy, and a shop, and fittings. I cant hardly do it for twenty.

HECTOR My worthy friend, we havnt got twenty pounds.

THE BURGLAR [*now master of the situation*] You can raise it among you, cant you?

MRS HUSHABYE Give him a sovereign, Hector, and get rid of him.

HECTOR [*giving him a pound*] There! Off with you.

THE BURGLAR [*rising and taking the money very ungratefully*] I wont promise nothing. You have more on you than a quid, all the lot of you, I mean.

LADY UTTERWORD [*vigorously*] Oh, let us prosecute him and have done with it. I have a conscience too, I hope, and I do not feel at all sure that we have any right to let him go, especially if he is going to be greedy and

impertinent.

THE BURGLAR [*quickly*] All right, lady, all right. Ive no wish to be anything but agreeable. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you kindly.

He is hurrying out when he is confronted in the doorway by Captain Shotover.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*fixing the burglar with a piercing regard*] Whats this? Are there two of you?

THE BURGLAR [*falling on his knees before the Captain in abject terror*] Oh my good Lord, what have I done? Dont tell me it's your house Ive broken into, Captain Shotover.

The Captain seizes him by the collar, drags him to his feet, and leads him to the middle of the group, Hector falling back beside his wife to make way for them.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*turning him towards Ellie*] Is that your daughter? [*He releases him*]

THE BURGLAR Well, how do I know, Captain? You know the sort of life you and me has led. Any young lady of that age might be my daughter anywhere in the wide world, as you might say.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*to Mazzini*] You are not Billy Dunn. This is Billy Dunn. Why have you imposed on me?

THE BURGLAR [*indignantly to Mazzini*] Have you been giving yourself out to be me? You, that nigh blew my head off! Shooting yourself, in a manner of speaking!

MAZZINI My dear Captain Shotover, ever since I came into this house I have done hardly anything else but assure you that I am not Mr William Dunn, but Mazzini Dunn, a very different person.

THE BURGLAR He dont belong to my branch, Captain. Theres two sets in the family, the thinking Duns and the drinking Duns, each going their own ways. Im a drinking Dunn, hes a thinking Dunn. But that didnt give him any right to shoot me.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER So youve turned burglar, have you?

THE BURGLAR No, Captain. I wouldnt disgrace our old sea calling by such a thing. I am no burglar.

LADY UTTERWORD What were you doing with my diamonds?

GUINNESS What did you break into the house for if youre no burglar?

RANDALL Mistook the house for your own and came in by the wrong window, eh?

THE BURGLAR Well, it's no use my telling you a lie I can take in most captains, but not Captain Shotover, because he sold himself to the devil in Zanzibar, and can divine water, spot gold, explode a cartridge in your pocket with a glance of his eye, and see the truth hidden in the heart of man But I'm no burglar

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Are you an honest man?

THE BURGLAR I dont set up to be better than my fellow-creatures, and never did, as you well know, Captain But what I do is innocent and pious I enquire about for houses where the right sort of people live I work it on them same as I worked it here I break into the house, put a few spoons or diamonds in my pocket; make a noise; get caught, and take up a collection And you wouldnt believe how hard it is to get caught when youre actually trying to I have knocked over all the chairs in a room without a soul paying any attention to me In the end I have had to walk out and leave the job

RANDALL When that happens, do you put back the spoons and diamonds?

THE BURGLAR Well, I dont fly in the face of Providence, if thats what you want to know

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Guinness you remember this man?

GUINNESS I should think I do, seeing I was married to him, the blackguard!

HESIONE } *exclaiming* { Married to him!
LADY UTTERWORD } *together* { Guinness!

THE BURGLAR It wasnt legal Ive been married to no end of women No use coming that over me

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Take him to the fore-castle [*he flings him to the door with a strength beyond his years*]

GUINNESS I suppose you mean the kitchen They wont have him there Do you expect servants to keep company with thieves and all sorts?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Land-thieves and water-thieves are the same flesh and blood Ill have no boatswain on my quarter-deck Off with you both

THE BURGLAR Yes. Captain [*He goes out humbly*]

MAZZINI Will it be safe to have him in the house like that?

GUINNESS Why didnt you shoot him, sir? If Id known who he was, Id have shot him

myself [*She goes out*]

MRS HUSHABYE Do sit down, everybody. [*She sits down on the sofa*]

They all move except Ellie Mazzini resumes his seat Randall sits down in the window seat near the starboard door, again making a pendulum of his poker, and studying it as Galileo might have done Hector sits on his left, in the middle Mangan, forgotten, sits in the port corner. Lady Utterword takes the big chair Captain Shotover goes into the pantry in deep abstraction They all look after him, and Lady Utterword coughs consciously

MRS HUSHABYE So Billy Dunn was poor nurse's little romance I knew there had been somebody

RANDALL They will fight their battles over again and enjoy themselves immensely

LADY UTTERWORD [*irritably*] You are not married; and you know nothing about it, Randall Hold your tongue

RANDALL Tyrant!

MRS HUSHABYE Well, we have had a very exciting evening Everything will be an anticlimax after it We'd better all go to bed

RANDALL Another burglar may turn up

MAZZINI Oh, impossible! I hope not

RANDALL Why not? There is more than one burglar in England

MRS HUSHABYE What do you say, Alf?

MANGAN [*huffily*] Oh, I dont matter I'm forgotten The burglar has put my nose out of joint Shove me into a corner and have done with me

MRS HUSHABYE [*jumping up mischievously, and going to him*] Would you like a walk on the heath, Alfred? With me?

ELLIE Go, Mr Mangan It will do you good Hesione will soothe you

MRS HUSHABYE [*slipping her arm under his and pulling him upright*] Come, Alfred There is a moon it's like the night in Tristan and Isolde [*She caresses his arm and draws him to the port garden door*]

MANGAN [*writhing but yielding*] How you can have the face—the heart—[*he breaks down and is heard sobbing as she takes him out*]

LADY UTTERWORD What an extraordinary way to behave! What is the matter with the man?

ELLIE [*in a strangely calm voice, staring into an imaginary distance*] His heart is breaking—that is all [*The Captain appears at the pantry door, listening*] It is a curious sensation. the sort of pain that goes mercifully beyond our

powers of feeling When your heart is broken, your boats are burned nothing matters any more It is the end of happiness and the beginning of peace

LADY UTTERWORD [*suddenly rising in a rage, to the astonishment of the rest*] How dare you?

HECTOR Good heavens! Whats the matter?

RANDALL [*in a warning whisper*] Tch—tch—tch! Steady

ELLIE [*surprised and haughty*] I was not addressing you particularly, Lady Utterword And I am not accustomed to be asked how dare I

LADY UTTERWORD Of course not Anyone can see how badly you have been brought up

MAZZINI Oh, I hope not, Lady Utterword Really!

LADY UTTERWORD I know very well what you meant The impudence!

ELLIE What on earth do you mean?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*advancing to the table*] She means that her heart will not break She has been longing all her life for someone to break it At last she has become afraid she has none to break

LADY UTTERWORD [*flinging herself on her knees and throwing her arms round him*] Papa dont say you think Ive no heart

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*raising her with grim tenderness*] If you had no heart how could you want to have it broken, child?

HECTOR [*rising with a bound*] Lady Utterword you are not to be trusted You have made a scene [*he runs out into the garden through the starboard door*]

LADY UTTERWORD Oh! Hector, Hector! [*she runs out after him*]

RANDALL. Only nerves, I assure you [*He rises and follows her, waving the poker in his agitation*] Ariadne! Ariadne! For God's sake be careful You will—[*he is gone*]

MAZZINI [*rising*] How distressing! Can I do anything, I wonder?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*promptly taking his chair and setting to work at the drawing-board*] No Go to bed Goodnight

MAZZINI [*bemltered*] Oh! Perhaps you are right

ELLIE Goodnight, dearest [*She kisses him*]

MAZZINI Goodnight, love [*He makes for the door, but turns aside to the bookshelves*] I'll just take a book [*he takes one*] Goodnight [*He goes out, leaving Ellie alone with the Captain*]

The Captain is intent on his drawing Ellie, standing sentry over his chair, contemplates him for a moment

ELLIE Does nothing ever disturb you, Captain Shotover?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Ive stood on the bridge for eighteen hours in a typhoon Life here is stormier, but I can stand it

ELLIE Do you think I ought to marry Mr Mangan?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*never looking up*] One rock is as good as another to be wrecked on

ELLIE I am not in love with him

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Who said you were?

ELLIE You are not surprised?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Surprised! At my age!

ELLIE It seems to me quite fair He wants me for one thing I want him for another

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Money?

ELLIE Yes

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Well, one turns the cheek the other kisses it One provides the cash the other spends it

ELLIE Who will have the best of the bargain, I wonder?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You These fellows live in an office all day You will have to put up with him from dinner to breakfast, but you will both be asleep most of that time All day you will be quit of him, and you will be shopping with his money If that is too much for you, marry a seafaring man you will be bothered with him only three weeks in the year, perhaps

ELLIE That would be best of all, I suppose

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Its a dangerous thing to be married right up to the hilt, like my daughter's husband The man is at home all day, like a damned soul in hell

ELLIE I never thought of that before

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER If youre marrying for business, you cant be too businesslike

ELLIE. Why do women always want other women's husbands?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Why do horse-thieves prefer a horse that is broken-in to one that is wild?

ELLIE [*with a short laugh*] I suppose so What a vile world it is!

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It doesnt concern me Im nearly out of it

ELLIE And Im only just beginning

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Yes, so look ahead

ELLIE Well, I think I am being very prudent

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I didnt say prudent. I said look ahead

ELLIE. Whats the difference?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. It's prudent to gain the whole world and lose your own soul But dont forget that your soul sticks to you if you stick to it; but the world has a way of slipping through your fingers

ELLIE [*nearly, leaving him and beginning to wander restlessly about the room*] I'm sorry, Captain Shotover, but it's no use talking like that to me Old-fashioned people are no use to me. Old-fashioned people think you can have a soul without money. They think the less money you have, the more soul you have Young people nowadays know better. A soul is a very expensive thing to keep: much more so than a motor car

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Is it? How much does your soul eat?

ELLIE Oh, a lot It eats music and pictures and books and mountains and lakes and beautiful things to wear and nice people to be with. In this country you cant have them without lots of money. that is why our souls are so horribly starved.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Mangan's soul lives on pigs' food

ELLIE Yes money is thrown away on him I suppose his soul was starved when he was young But it will not be thrown away on me. It is just because I want to save my soul that I am marrying for money. All the women who are not fools do.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER There are other ways of getting money. Why dont you steal it?

ELLIE Because I dont want to go to prison

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Is that the only reason? Are you quite sure honesty has nothing to do with it?

ELLIE. Oh, you are very very old-fashioned, Captain. Does any modern girl believe that the legal and illegal ways of getting money are the honest and dishonest ways? Mangan robbed my father and my father's friends I should rob all the money back from Mangan if the police would let me. As they wont, I must get it back by marrying him

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I cant argue I'm too old my mind is made up and finished All I can tell you is that, old-fashioned or new-fashioned, if you sell yourself, you deal your soul a blow that all the books and pictures and concerts and scenery in the world wont heal [*he gets up suddenly and makes for the*

pantry].

ELLIE [*running after him and seizing him by the sleeve*] Then why did you sell yourself to the devil in Zanzibar?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*stopping, startled*] What?

ELLIE You shall not run away before you answer I have found out that trick of yours. If you sold yourself, why shouldnt I?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I had to deal with men so degraded that they wouldnt obey me unless I swore at them and kicked them and beat them with my fists. Foolish people took young thieves off the streets; flung them into a training ship where they were taught to fear the cane instead of fearing God; and thought theyd made men and sailors of them by private subscription. I tricked these thieves into believing I'd sold myself to the devil. It saved my soul from the kicking and swearing that was damning me by inches.

ELLIE [*releasing him*] I shall pretend to sell myself to Boss Mangan to save my soul from the poverty that is damning me by inches.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Riches will damn you ten times deeper. Riches wont save even your body.

ELLIE Old-fashioned again. We know now that the soul is the body, and the body the soul They tell us they are different because they want to persuade us that we can keep our souls if we let them make slaves of our bodies I am afraid you are no use to me, Captain

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. What did you expect? A Savior, eh? Are you old-fashioned enough to believe in that?

ELLIE. No. But I thought you were very wise, and might help me. Now I have found you out. You pretend to be busy, and think of fine things to say, and run in and out to surprise people by saying them, and get away before they can answer you

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It confuses me to be answered It discourages me. I cannot bear men and women I have to run away I must run away now [*he tries to*].

ELLIE [*again seizing his arm*] You shall not run away from me. I can hypnotize you. You are the only person in the house I can say what I like to I know you are fond of me Sit down [*She draws him to the sofa*]

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*yielding*] Take care I am in my dotage Old men are dangerous it doesnt matter to them what is going to happen to the world

They sit side by side on the sofa. She leans affectionately against him with her head on his shoulder and her eyes half closed

ELLIE [*dreamily*] I should have thought nothing else mattered to old men. They can't be very interested in what is going to happen to themselves.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER A man's interest in the world is only the overflow from his interest in himself. When you are a child your vessel is not yet full, so you care for nothing but your own affairs. When you grow up, your vessel overflows, and you are a politician, a philosopher, or an explorer and adventurer. In old age the vessel dries up: there is no overflow: you are a child again. I can give you the memories of my ancient wisdom: mere scraps andavings, but I no longer really care for anything but my own little wants and hobbies. I sit here working out my old ideas as a means of destroying my fellow-creatures. I see my daughters and their men living foolish lives of romance and sentiment and snobbery. I see you, the younger generation, turning from their romance and sentiment and snobbery to money and comfort and hard common sense. I was ten times happier on the bridge in the typhoon, or frozen into Arctic ice for months in darkness, than you or they have ever been. You are looking for a rich husband. At your age I looked for hardship, danger, horror, and death, that I might feel the life in me more intensely. I did not let the fear of death govern my life, and my reward was, I had my life. You are going to let the fear of poverty govern your life, and your reward will be that you will eat, but you will not live.

ELLIE [*sitting up impatiently*] But what can I do? I am not a sea captain. I can't stand on bridges in typhoons, or go slaughtering seals and whales in Greenland's icy mountains. They won't let women be captains. Do you want me to be a stewardess?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. There are worse lives. The stewardesses could come ashore if they liked, but they sail and sail and sail.

ELLIE What could they do ashore but marry for money? I don't want to be a stewardess. I am too bad a sailor. Think of something else for me.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I can't think so long and continuously. I am too old. I must go in and out. [*He tries to rise*]

ELLIE [*pulling him back*] You shall not. You

are happy here, aren't you?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I tell you it's dangerous to keep me. I can't keep awake and alert.

ELLIE. What do you run away for? To sleep?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No. To get a glass of rum.

ELLIE [*frightfully disillusioned*] Is that it? How disgusting! Do you like being drunk?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No. I dread being drunk more than anything in the world. To be drunk means to have dreams, to go soft, to be easily pleased and deceived, to fall into the clutches of women. Drink does that for you when you are young. But when you are old, very, very old, like me, the dreams come by themselves. You don't know how terrible that is: you are young; you sleep at night only, and sleep soundly. But later on you will sleep in the afternoon. Later still you will sleep even in the morning, and you will awake tired, tired of life. You will never be free from dozing and dreams: the dreams will steal upon your work every ten minutes unless you can awaken yourself with rum. I drink now to keep sober, but the dreams are conquering: rum is not what it was. I have had ten glasses since you came, and it might be so much water. Go get me another. Guinness knows where it is. You had better see for yourself the horror of an old man drinking.

ELLIE You shall not drink. Dream. I like you to dream. You must never be in the real world when we talk together.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I am too weary to resist, or too weak. I am in my second childhood. I do not see you as you really are. I can't remember what I really am. I feel nothing but the accursed happiness I have dreaded all my life long: the happiness that comes as life goes, the happiness of yielding and dreaming instead of resisting and doing, the sweetness of the fruit that is going rotten.

ELLIE You dread it almost as much as I used to dread losing my dreams and having to fight and do things. But that is all over for me: my dreams are dashed to pieces. I should like to marry a very old, very rich man. I should like to marry you. I had much rather marry you than marry Mangan. Are you very rich?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No. Lying from hand to mouth. And I have a wife somewhere in Jamaica: a black one. My first wife. Unless

she's dead.

ELLIE What a pity! I feel so happy with you [*She takes his hand, almost unconsciously, and pats it*] I thought I should never feel happy again

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Why?

ELLIE Dont you know?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER No

ELLIE Heartbreak I fell in love with Hector, and didnt know he was married

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Heartbreak? Are you one of those who are so sufficient to themselves that they are only happy when they are stripped of everything, even of hope?

ELLIE [*gripping the hand*] It seems so, for I feel now as if there was nothing I could not do, because I want nothing

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Thats the only real strength. Thats genius Thats better than rum

ELLIE [*throwing away his hand*] Rum! Why do you spoil it?

Hector and Randall come in from the garden through the starboard door

HECTOR I beg your pardon We did not know there was anyone here

ELLIE [*rising*] That means that you want to tell Mr Randall the story about the tiger. Come, Captain I want to talk to my father, and you had better come with me.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*rising*] Nonsense! the man is in bed.

ELLIE Aha! Ive caught you My real father has gone to bed, but the father you gave me is in the kitchen You knew quite well all along Come [*She draws him out into the garden with her through the port door*]

HECTOR Thats an extraordinary girl She has the Ancient Mariner on a string like a Pekinese dog

RANDALL Now that they have gone, shall we have a friendly chat?

HECTOR You are in what is supposed to be my house I am at your disposal

Hector sits down in the draughtsman's chair, turning it to face Randall, who remains standing, leaning at his ease against the carpenter's bench

RANDALL I take it that we may be quite frank. I mean about Lady Utterword

HECTOR You may I have nothing to be frank about I never met her until this afternoon

RANDALL [*straightening up*] What! But you are her sister's husband

HECTOR. Well, if you come to that, you are

her husband's brother

RANDALL But you seem to be on intimate terms with her

HECTOR So do you

RANDALL. Yes, but I am on intimate terms with her I have known her for years

HECTOR It took her years to get to the same point with you that she got to with me in five minutes, it seems

RANDALL [*vered*] Really, Ariadne is the limit [*he moves away huffishly towards the windows*].

HECTOR [*coolly*] She is, as I remarked to Hesione, a very enterprising woman

RANDALL [*returning, much troubled*] You see, Hushabye, you are what women consider a good-looking man

HECTOR. I cultivated that appearance in the days of my vanity, and Hesione insists on my keeping it up She makes me wear these ridiculous things [*indicating his Arab costume*] because she thinks me absurd in evening dress

RANDALL Still, you do keep it up, old chap Now, I assure you I have not an atom of jealousy in my disposition—

HECTOR. The question would seem to be rather whether your brother has any touch of that sort

RANDALL What! Hastings! Oh, dont trouble about Hastings He has the gift of being able to work sixteen hours a day at the dullest detail, and actually likes it That gets him to the top wherever he goes As long as Ariadne takes care that he is fed regularly, he is only too thankful to anyone who will keep her in good humor for him

HECTOR. And as she has all the Shotover fascination, there is plenty of competition for the job, eh?

RANDALL [*angrily*] She encourages them Her conduct is perfectly scandalous I assure you, my dear fellow, I havnt an atom of jealousy in my composition, but she makes herself the talk of every place she goes to by her thoughtlessness It's nothing more. she doesnt really care for the men she keeps hanging about her; but how is the world to know that? It's not fair to Hastings It's not fair to me

HECTOR Her theory is that her conduct is so correct—

RANDALL. Correct! She does nothing but make scenes from morning til night You be careful, old chap. She will get you into

trouble. that is, she would if she really cared for you

HECTOR Doesnt she?

RANDALL Not a scrap She may want your scalp to add to her collection, but her true affection has been engaged years ago You had really better be careful

HECTOR Do you suffer much from this jealousy?

RANDALL Jealousy! I jealous! My dear fellow, havnt I told you that there is not an atom of—

HECTOR Yes And Lady Utterword told me she never made scenes Well, dont waste your jealousy on my moustache Never waste jealousy on a real man it is the imaginary hero that supplants us all in the long run Besides, jealousy does not belong to your easy man-of-the-world pose, which you carry so well in other respects

RANDALL Really, Hushabye, I think a man may be allowed to be a gentleman without being accused of posing

HECTOR It is a pose like any other In this house we know all the poses our game is to find out the man under the pose The man under your pose is apparently Ellie's favorite, Othello

RANDALL Some of your games in this house are damned annoying, let me tell you

HECTOR Yes I have been their victim for many years I used to writhe under them at first, but I became accustomed to them At last I learned to play them

RANDALL If it's all the same to you, I had rather you didnt play them on me You evidently dont quite understand my character, or my notions of good form

HECTOR Is it your notion of good form to give away Lady Utterword?

RANDALL [*a childishly plaintive note breaking into his huff*] I have not said a word against Lady Utterword This is just the conspiracy over again

HECTOR. What conspiracy?

RANDALL. You know very well, sir A conspiracy to make me out to be pettish and jealous and childish and everything I am not Everyone knows I am just the opposite

HECTOR [*rising*] Something in the air of the house has upset you It often does have that effect [*He goes to the garden door and calls Lady Utterword with commanding emphasis*] Ariadne!

LADY UTTERWORD [*at some distance*] Yes

RANDALL. What are you calling her for? I want to speak—

LADY UTTERWORD [*arriving breathless*] Yes You really are a terribly commanding person. Whats the matter?

HECTOR I do not know how to manage your friend Randall No doubt you do

LADY UTTERWORD Randall have you been making yourself ridiculous, as usual? I can see it in your face Really, you are the most pettish creature

RANDALL. You know quite well, Ariadne, that I have not an ounce of pettishness in my disposition I have made myself perfectly pleasant here I have remained absolutely cool and imperturbable in the face of a burglar Imperturbability is almost too strong a point of mine But [*putting his foot down with a stamp, and walking angrily up and down the room*] I insist on being treated with a certain consideration I will not allow Hushabye to take liberties with me I will not stand your encouraging people as you do

HECTOR The man has a rooted delusion that he is your husband

LADY UTTERWORD I know He is jealous As if he had any right to be! He compromises me everywhere He makes scenes all over the place Randall I will not allow it. I simply will not allow it You had no right to discuss me with Hector I will not be discussed by men

HECTOR Be reasonable, Ariadne Your fatal gift of beauty forces men to discuss you

LADY UTTERWORD Oh indeed! what about your fatal gift of beauty?

HECTOR How can I help it?

LADY UTTERWORD You could cut off your moustache I cant cut off my nose I get my whole life messed up with people falling in love with me And then Randall says I run after men

RANDALL I—

LADY UTTERWORD Yes you do you said it just now Why cant you think of something else than women? Napoleon was quite right when he said that women are the occupation of the idle man Well, if ever there was an idle man on earth, his name is Randall Utterword

RANDALL. Ariadne—

LADY UTTERWORD [*overwhelming him with a torrent of words*] Oh yes you are it's no use denying it What have you ever done? What good are you? You are as much trouble in the house as a child of three You couldnt

live without your valet

RANDALL This is—

LADY UTTERWORD Laziness! You are laziness incarnate You are selfishness itself. You are the most uninteresting man on earth You cant even gossip about anything but yourself and your grievances and your ailments and the people who have offended you [*Turning to Hector*] Do you know what they call him, Hector?

HECTOR [*speaking together*] Please dont tell me.

RANDALL [*together*] I'll not stand it—

LADY UTTERWORD Randall the Rotter that is his name in good society

RANDALL [*shouting*] I'll not bear it, I tell you Will you listen to me, you infernal— [*he chokes*]

LADY UTTERWORD Well go on What were you going to call me? An infernal what? Which unpleasant animal is it to be this time?

RANDALL [*foaming*] There is no animal in the world so hateful as a woman can be. You are a maddening devil Hushabye. you will not believe me when I tell you that I have loved this demon all my life, but God knows I have paid for it [*he sits down in the draughtsman's chair, weeping*]

LADY UTTERWORD [*standing over him with triumphant contempt*] Cry-baby!

HECTOR [*gravely, coming to him*] My friend the Shotover sisters have two strange powers over men They can make them love, and they can make them cry Thank your stars that you are not married to one of them

LADY UTTERWORD [*haughtily*] And pray, Hector—

HECTOR [*suddenly catching her round the shoulders, swinging her right round him and away from Randall, and gripping her throat with the other hand*] Ariadne if you attempt to start on me, I'll choke you do you hear? The cat-and-mouse game with the other sex is a good game; but I can play your head off at it [*He throws her, not at all gently, into the big chair, and proceeds, less fiercely but firmly*] It is true that Napoleon said that woman is the occupation of the idle man But he added that she is the relaxation of the warrior Well, I am the warrior So take care

LADY UTTERWORD [*not in the least put out, and rather pleased by his violence*] My dear Hector I have only done what you asked me to do

HECTOR How do you make that out, pray?

LADY UTTERWORD You called me in to

manage Randall, didnt you? You said you couldnt manage him yourself

HECTOR Well, what if I did? I did not ask you to drive the man mad

LADY UTTERWORD. He isnt mad Thats the way to manage him. If you were a mother, youd understand

HECTOR Mother! What are you up to now?

LADY UTTERWORD Its quite simple When the children got nerves and were naughty, I smacked them just enough to give them a good cry and a healthy nervous shock They went to sleep and were quite good afterwards Well, I cant smack Randall he is too big, so when he gets nerves and is naughty, I just rag him til he cries He will be all right now Look he is half asleep already [*which is quite true*]

RANDALL [*naking up indignantly*] I'm not You are most cruel, Ariadne [*Sentimentally*] But I suppose I must forgive you, as usual [*he checks himself in the act of yawning*]

LADY UTTERWORD [*to Hector*] Is the explanation satisfactory, dread warrior?

HECTOR Some day I shall kill you, if you go too far I thought you were a fool

LADY UTTERWORD [*laughing*] Everybody does, at first But I am not such a fool as I look [*She rises complacently*] Now, Randall: go to bed You will be a good boy in the morning.

RANDALL [*only very faintly rebellious*] I'll go to bed when I like It isnt ten yet.

LADY UTTERWORD It is long past ten See that he goes to bed at once, Hector [*She goes into the garden*]

HECTOR Is there any slavery on earth viler than this slavery of men to women?

RANDALL [*rising resolutely*] I'll not speak to her tomorrow I'll not speak to her for another week I'll give her such a lesson I'll go straight to bed without bidding her good-night [*He makes for the door leading to the hall*]

HECTOR You are under a spell, man Old Shotover sold himself to the devil in Zanzibar The devil gave him a black witch for a wife, and these two demon daughters are their mystical progeny I am tied to Hesione's apron-string, but I'm her husband, and if I did go stark staring mad about her, at least we became man and wife But why should you let yourself be dragged about and beaten by Ariadne as a toy donkey is dragged about and beaten by a child? What do you get by

trouble. that is, she would if she really cared for you

HECTOR Doesnt she?

RANDALL Not a scrap She may want your scalp to add to her collection, but her true affection has been engaged years ago You had really better be careful

HECTOR Do you suffer much from this jealousy?

RANDALL Jealousy! I jealous! My dear fellow, havnt I told you that there is not an atom of—

HECTOR Yes And Lady Utterword told me she never made scenes Well, dont waste your jealousy on my moustache Never waste jealousy on a real man it is the imaginary hero that supplants us all in the long run Besides, jealousy does not belong to your easy man-of-the-world pose, which you carry so well in other respects

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RANDALL [*only very faintly rebellious*] I'll go to bed when I like. It isnt ten yet.

LADY UTTERWORD. It is long past ten. See that he goes to bed at once, Hector. [*She goes into the garden*].

HECTOR. Is there any slavery on earth viler than this slavery of men to women?

RANDALL [*rising resolutely*] I'll not speak to her tomorrow. I'll not speak to her for another week. I'll give her such a lesson. I'll go straight to bed without bidding her good-night [*He makes for the door leading to the hall*].

HECTOR. You are under a spell, man. Old Shotover sold himself to the devil in Zanzibar. The devil gave him a black witch for a wife; and these two demon daughters are their mystical progeny. I am tied to Hesione's apron-string, but I'm her husband; and if I did go stark staring mad about her, at least we became man and wife. But why should you let yourself be dragged about and beaten by Ariadne as a toy donkey is dragged about and beaten by a child? What do you get by

it? Are you her lover?

RANDALL. You must not misunderstand me
In a higher sense—in a Platonic sense—

HECTOR Psha! Platonic sense! She makes
you her servant, and when pay-day comes
round, she bilks you that is what you mean

RANDALL [*fleeably*] Well, if I dont mind, I
dont see what business it is of yours Besides,
I tell you I am going to punish her You shall
see I know how to deal with women I'm
really very sleepy Say goodnight to Mrs
Hushabye for me, will you, like a good chap
Goodnight [*He hurries out*]

HECTOR Poor wretch! Oh women! women!
women! [*He lifts his fists in invocation to
heaven*] Fall Fall and crush [*He goes out into
the garden*]

ACT III

*In the garden, Hector, as he comes out through
the glass door of the poop, finds Lady Utterword
lying voluptuously in the hammock on the east
side of the flagstaff, in the circle of light cast by
the electric arc, which is like a moon in its opal
globe Beneath the head of the hammock, a camp-
stool On the other side of the flagstaff, on the
long garden seat, Captain Shotover is asleep,
with Ellie beside him, leaning affectionately
against him on his right hand On his left is a
deck chair Behind them in the gloom, Hesione is
strolling about with Mangan It is a fine still
night, moonless*

LADY UTTERWORD What a lovely night! It
seems made for us

HECTOR The night takes no interest in us
What are we to the night? [*He sits down
moodily in the deck chair*]

ELLIE [*dreamily, nestling against the Captain*]
Its beauty soaks into my nerves In the night
there is peace for the old and hope for the
young

HECTOR Is that remark your own?

ELLIE No Only the last thing the Captain
said before he went to sleep

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. I'm not asleep

HECTOR Randall is Also Mr Mazzini Dunn
Mangan too, probably

MANGAN No

HECTOR Oh, you are there I thought
Hesione would have sent you to bed by this
time

MRS HUSHABYE [*coming to the back of the gar-
den seat, into the light, with Mangan*] I think
I shall. He keeps telling me he has a pre-
sentiment that he is going to die I never

met a man so greedy for sympathy

MANGAN [*plainly*] But I have a presenti-
ment I really have And you wouldnt listen

MRS HUSHABYE I was listening for some-
thing else There was a sort of splendid
drumming in the sky. Did none of you hear
it? It came from a distance and then died
away

MANGAN. I tell you it was a train

MRS HUSHABYE And I tell you, Alf, there
is no train at this hour The last is nine forty-
five.

MANGAN But a goods train

MRS HUSHABYE Not on our little line They
tack a truck on to the passenger train What
can it have been, Hector?

HECTOR Heaven's threatening growl of
[*Thunder*] [*Tiercely*]
[*Thunder*] [*Tiercely*]
[*Thunder*] [*Tiercely*]

Either out of that darkness some new crea-
tion will come to supplant us as we have
supplanted the animals, or the heavens will
fall in thunder and destroy us

LADY UTTERWORD [*in a cool instructive man-
ner, rattling comfortably in her hammock*]
We have not supplanted the animals, Hector
Why do you ask heaven to destroy this house,
which could be made quite comfortable if
Hesione had any notion of how to live? Dont
you know what is wrong with it?

HECTOR We are wrong with it. There is no
sense in us We are useless, dangerous, and
ought to be abolished

LADY UTTERWORD Nonsense! Hastings told
me the very first day he came here, nearly
twentyfour years ago, what is wrong with
the house

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER What! The numskull
said there was something wrong with my
house!

LADY UTTERWORD I said Hastings said it,
and he is not in the least a numskull.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Whats wrong with my
house?

LADY UTTERWORD Just what is wrong with
a ship, papa Wasnt it clever of Hastings to
see that?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER The man's a fool Theres
nothing wrong with a ship

LADY UTTERWORD Yes there is

MRS HUSHABYE But what is it? Dont be
aggravating, Addy

LADY UTTERWORD Guess

HECTOR Demons Daughters of the witch
of Zanzibar Demons.

LADY UTTERWORD Not a bit. I assure you, all this house needs to make it a sensible, healthy, pleasant house, with good appetites and sound sleep in it, is horses

MRS HUSHABYE. Horses! What rubbish!

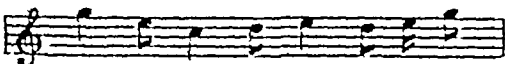
LADY UTTERWORD. Yes! horses. Why have we never been able to let this house? Because there are no proper stables. Go anywhere in England where there are natural, wholesome, contented, and really nice English people, and what do you always find? That the stables are the real centre of the household, and that if any visitor wants to play the piano the whole room has to be upset before it can be opened, there are so many things piled on it. I never lived until I learned to ride, and I shall never ride really well because I didn't begin as a child. There are only two classes in good society in England the equestrian classes and the neurotic classes. It isn't mere convention everybody can see that the people who hunt are the right people and the people who don't are the wrong ones.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER There is some truth in this. My ship made a man of me, and a ship is the horse of the sea.

LADY UTTERWORD Exactly how Hastings explained your being a gentleman.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Not bad for a numskull. Bring the man here with you next time. I must talk to him.

LADY UTTERWORD Why is Randall such an obvious rotter? He is well bred, he has been at a public school and a university, he has been in the Foreign Office, he knows the best people and has lived all his life among them. Why is he so unsatisfactory, so contemptible? Why can't he get a valet to stay with him longer than a few months? Just because he is too lazy and pleasure-loving to hunt and shoot. He strums the piano, and sketches, and runs after married women, and reads literary books and poems. He actually plays the flute, but I never let him bring it into my house. If he would only—*[she is interrupted by the melancholy strains of a flute coming from an open window above. She raises herself indignantly in the hammock]* Randall, you have not gone to bed. Have you been listening? *[The flute replies perily]*



How vulgar! Go to bed instantly, Randall

how dare you? *[The window is slammed down. She subsides]* How can anyone care for such a creature!

MRS HUSHABYE Addy, do you think Ellie ought to marry poor Alfred merely for his money?

MANGAN *[much alarmed]* Whats that? Mrs Hushabye, are my affairs to be discussed like this before everybody?

LADY UTTERWORD I don't think Randall is listening now.

MANGAN Everybody is listening. It isn't right.

MRS HUSHABYE But in the dark, what does it matter? Ellie doesn't mind. Do you, Ellie?

ELLIE Not in the least. What is your opinion, Lady Utterword? You have so much good sense.

MANGAN But it isn't right. It—*[Mrs Hushabye puts her hand on his mouth]* Oh, very well.

LADY UTTERWORD How much money have you, Mr Mangan?

MANGAN Really—No. I can't stand this.

LADY UTTERWORD Nonsense, Mr Mangan! It all turns on your income, doesn't it?

MANGAN Well, if you come to that, how much money has she?

ELLIE None.

LADY UTTERWORD You are answered, Mr Mangan. And now, as you have made Miss Dunn throw her cards on the table, you cannot refuse to shew your own.

MRS HUSHABYE Come, Alf! out with it! How much?

MANGAN *[baited out of all prudence]* Well, if you want to know, I have no money and never had any.

MRS HUSHABYE Alfred, you mustn't tell naughty stories.

MANGAN I'm not telling you stories. I'm telling you the raw truth.

LADY UTTERWORD Then what do you live on, Mr Mangan?

MANGAN Travelling expenses. And a trifle of commission.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER What more have any of us but travelling expenses for our life's journey?

MRS HUSHABYE But you have factories and capital and things?

MANGAN. People think I have. People think I'm an industrial Napoleon. That's why Miss Ellie wants to marry me. But I tell you I have nothing.

ELLIE Do you mean that the factories are like Marcus's tigers? That they dont exist?

MANGAN They exist all right enough But theyre not mine They belong to syndicates and shareholders and all sorts of lazy good-for-nothing capitalists I get money from such people to start the factories I find people like Miss Dunn's father to work them, and keep a tight hand so as to make them pay Of course I make them keep me going pretty well, but it's a dog's life, and I dont own anything

MRS HUSHABYE Alfred, Alfred you are making a poor mouth of it to get out of marrying Ellie

MANGAN I'm telling the truth about my money for the first time in my life, and it's the first time my word has ever been doubted

LADY UTTERWORD How sad! Why dont you go in for politics, Mr Mangan?

MANGAN Go in for politics! Where have you been living? I am in politics

LADY UTTERWORD I'm sure I beg your pardon I never heard of you

MANGAN Let me tell you, Lady Utterword, that the Prime Minister of this country asked me to join the Government without even going through the nonsense of an election, as the dictator of a great public department.

LADY UTTERWORD As a Conservative or a Liberal?

MANGAN No such nonsense As a practical business man [*They all burst out laughing*]
What are you all laughing at?

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, Alfred, Alfred!

ELLIE You! who have to get my father to do everything for you!

MRS HUSHABYE You! who are afraid of your own workmen!

HECTOR You! with whom three women have been playing cat and mouse all the evening!

LADY UTTERWORD You must have given an immense sum to the party funds, Mr Mangan

MANGAN Not a penny out of my own pocket The syndicate found the money they knew how useful I should be to them in the Government

LADY UTTERWORD This is most interesting and unexpected, Mr Mangan And what have your administrative achievements been, so far?

MANGAN. Achievements? Well, I dont know what you call achievements, but Ive jolly

well put a stop to the games of the other fellows in the other departments Every man of them thought he was going to save the country all by himself, and do me out of the credit and out of my chance of a title I took good care that if they wouldnt let me do it they shouldnt do it themselves either I may not know anything about my own machinery, but I know how to stick a ramrod into the other fellow's And now they all look the biggest fools going

HECTOR And in heaven's name, what do you look like?

MANGAN I look like the fellow that was too clever for all the others, dont I? If that isnt a triumph of practical business, what is?

HECTOR Is this England, or is it a madhouse?

LADY UTTERWORD Do you expect to save the country, Mr Mangan?

MANGAN Well, who else will? Will your Mr Randall save it?

LADY UTTERWORD Randall the rotter! Certainly not

MANGAN Will your brother-in-law save it with his moustache and his fine talk

HECTOR Yes, if they will let me

MANGAN [*smearing*] Ah! Will they let you?

HECTOR No They prefer you

MANGAN Very well then, as youre in a world where I'm appreciated and youre not, youd best be civil to me, hadnt you? Who else is there but me?

LADY UTTERWORD There is Hastings Get rid of your ridiculous sham democracy, and give Hastings the necessary powers, and a good supply of bamboo to bring the British native to his senses he will save the country with the greatest ease

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It had better be lost Any fool can govern with a stick in his hand I could govern that way It is not God's way The man is a numskull

LADY UTTERWORD The man is worth all of you rolled into one What do you say, Miss Dunn?

ELLIE I think my father would do very well if people did not put upon him and cheat him and despise him because he is so good

MANGAN [*contemptuously*] I think I see Mazzini Dunn getting into parliament or pushing his way into the Government Weve not come to that yet, thank God! What do you say, Mrs Hushabye?

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, I say it matters very little which of you governs the country so

long as we govern you

HECTOR We? Who is we, pray?

MRS HUSHABYE The devil's granddaughters, dear The lovely women

HECTOR [*raising his hands as before*] Fall, I say; and deliver us from the lures of Satan!

ELLIE There seems to be nothing real in the world except my father and Shakespear. Marcus's tigers are false; Mr Mangan's millions are false, there is nothing really strong and true about Hesione but her beautiful black hair, and Lady Utterword's is too pretty to be real The one thing that was left to me was the Captain's seventh degree of concentration; and that turns out to be—

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Rum

LADY UTTERWORD [*placidly*] A good deal of my hair is quite genuine The Duchess of Dithering offered me fifty guineas for this [*touching her forehead*] under the impression that it was a transformation, but it is all natural except the color

MANGAN [*wildly*] Look here I'm going to take off all my clothes [*he begins tearing off his coat*]

LADY UTTERWORD.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER.

HECTOR

ELLIE.

[*in consternation*]

Mr Mangan!
Whats that?
Ha! ha! Do
Do
Please dont

MRS HUSHABYE [*catching his arm and stopping him*] Alfred for shame! Are you mad?

MANGAN Shame! What shame is there in this house? Let's all strip stark naked We may as well do the thing thoroughly when we're about it. We've stripped ourselves morally naked. well, let us strip ourselves physically naked as well, and see how we like it I tell you I cant bear this I was brought up to be respectable I dont mind the women dyeing their hair and the men drinking: it's human nature. But it's not human nature to tell everybody about it Every time one of you opens your mouth I go like this [*he covers as if to avoid a missile*] afraid of what will come next How are we to have any self-respect if we dont keep it up that we're better than we really are?

LADY UTTERWORD. I quite sympathize with you, Mr Mangan I have been through it all, and I know by experience that men and women are delicate plants and must be cultivated under glass. Our family habit of throwing stones in all directions and letting the air in is not only unbearably rude, but posi-

tively dangerous Still, there is no use catching physical colds as well as moral ones, so please keep your clothes on

MANGAN I'll do as I like not what you tell me Am I a child or a grown man? I wont stand this mothering tyranny I'll go back to the city, where I'm respected and made much of

MRS HUSHABYE Goodbye, Alf Think of us sometimes in the city Think of Elle's youth!

ELLIE Think of Hesione's eyes and hair!

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Think of this garden in which you are not a dog barking to keep the truth out!

HECTOR Think of Lady Utterword's beauty! her good sense! her style!

LADY UTTERWORD Flatterer. Think, Mr Mangan, whether you can really do any better for yourself elsewhere. that is the essential point, isnt it?

MANGAN [*surrendering*] All right all right I'm done Have it your own way. Only let me alone I dont know whether I'm on my head or my heels when you all start on me like this I'll stay. I'll marry her I'll do anything for a quiet life Are you satisfied now?

ELLIE No I never really intended to make you marry me, Mr Mangan Never in the depths of my soul I only wanted to feel my strength to know that you could not escape if I chose to take you

MANGAN [*indignantly*] What! Do you mean to say you are going to throw me over after my acting so handsome?

LADY UTTERWORD I should not be too hasty, Miss Dunn You can throw Mr Mangan over at any time up to the last moment Very few men in his position go bankrupt. You can live very comfortably on his reputation for immense wealth

ELLIE I cannot commit bigamy, Lady Utterword.

MRS HUSHABYE.

LADY UTTERWORD.

MANGAN.

HECTOR.

[*exclaiming all together*]

Bigamy! What-ever on earth are you talking about, Elle?
Bigamy! What do you mean, Miss Dunn?
Bigamy! Do you mean to say youre married already?
Bigamy! This is some enigma.

ELLIE Only half an hour ago I became Captain Shotover's white wife

MRS HUSHABYE Ellie! What nonsense! Where?

ELLIE In heaven, where all true marriages are made

LADY UTTERWORD Really, Miss Dunn! Really, papa!

MANGAN He told me *I* was too old! And him a mummy!

HECTOR [*quoting Shelley*]

"Their altar the grassy earth outspread,
And their priest the muttering wind"

ELLIE Yes I, Ellie Dunn, give my broken heart and my strong sound soul to its natural captain, my spiritual husband and second father

She draws the Captain's arm through hers, and pats his hand. The Captain remains fast asleep

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, thats very clever of you, pettiksins Very clever Alfred you could never have lived up to Ellie You must be content with a little share of me

MANGAN [*sniffing and wiping his eyes*] It isnt kind—[*his emotion chokes him*]

LADY UTTERWORD You are well out of it, Mr Mangan Miss Dunn is the most conceited young woman I have met since I came back to England

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, Ellie isnt conceited Are you, pettiksins?

ELLIE I know my strength now, Hesione

MANGAN Brazen, I call you Brazen

MRS HUSHABYE Tut tut, Alfred dont be rude Dont you feel how lovely this marriage night is, made in heaven? Arnt you happy, you and Hector? Open your eyes Addy and Ellie look beautiful enough to please the most fastidious man we live and love and have not a care in the world We women have managed all that for you. Why in the name of common sense do you go on as if you were two miserable wretches?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER I tell you happiness is no good. You can be happy when you are only half alive I am happier now I am half dead than ever I was in my prime But there is no blessing on my happiness

ELLIE [*her face lighting up*] Life with a blessing! that is what I want Now I know the real reason why I couldnt marry Mr Mangan there would be no blessing on our marriage There is a blessing on my broken heart. There is a blessing on your beauty,

Hesione There is a blessing on your father's spirit Even on the lies of Marcus there is a blessing, but on Mr Mangan's money there is none

MANGAN I dont understand a word of that
ELLIE Neither do I But I know it means something

MANGAN Dont say there was any difficulty about the blessing I was ready to get a bishop to marry us

MRS HUSHABYE Isnt he a fool, pettiksins?

HECTOR [*fiercely*] Do not scorn the man We are all fools

Mazzini, in pyjamas and a richly colored silk dressing-gown, comes from the house, on Lady Utterword's side

MRS HUSHABYE Oh! here comes the only man who ever resisted me Whats the matter, Mr Dunn? Is the house on fire?

MAZZINI Oh no nothing's the matter, but really it's impossible to go to sleep with such an interesting conversation going on under one's window, and on such a beautiful night too I just had to come down and join you all What has it all been about?

MRS HUSHABYE Oh, wonderful things, soldier of freedom

HECTOR For example, Mangan, as a practical business man, has tried to undress himself and has failed ignominiously, whilst you, as an idealist, have succeeded brilliantly

MAZZINI I hope you dont mind my being like this, Mrs Hushabye [*He sits down on the campstool*]

MRS HUSHABYE On the contrary, I could wish you always like that.

LADY UTTERWORD Your daughter's match is off, Mr Dunn It seems that Mr Mangan, whom we all supposed to be a man of property, owns absolutely nothing

MAZZINI Well of course I knew that, Lady Utterword But if people believe in him and are always giving him money, whereas they dont believe in me and never give me any, how can I ask poor Ellie to depend on what I can do for her?

MANGAN Dont you run away with this idea that I have nothing I—

HECTOR Oh, dont explain We understand You have a couple of thousand pounds in exchequer bills, 50,000 shares worth tenpence a dozen, and half a dozen tabloids of cyanide of potassium to poison yourself with when you are found out Thats the reality of your millions

MAZZINI Oh no, no, no He is quite honest the businesses are genuine and perfectly legal

HECTOR [*disgusted*] Yah! Not even a great swindler!

MANGAN So you think But I've been too many for some honest men, for all that

LADY UTTERWORD There is no pleasing you, Mr Mangan You are determined to be neither rich nor poor, honest nor dishonest

MANGAN There you go again. Ever since I came into this silly house I have been made to look like a fool, though I'm as good a man in this house as in the city

ELLIE [*musically*] Yes this silly house, this strangely happy house, this agonizing house, this house without foundations I shall call it Heartbreak House

MRS HUSHABYE. Stop, Ellie, or I shall howl like an animal

MANGAN [*breaks into a low snivelling*]"

MRS HUSHABYE There! you have set Alfred off.

ELLIE I like him best when he is howling.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Silence! [*Mangan subsides into silence*] I say, let the heart break in silence

HECTOR Do you accept that name for your house?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER It is not my house: it is only my kennel

HECTOR. We have been too long here We do not live in this house we haunt it

LADY UTTERWORD [*heart torn*] It is dreadful to think how you have been here all these years while I have gone round the world. I escaped young, but it has drawn me back. It wants to break my heart too. But it shant I have left you and it behind It was silly of me to come back. I felt sentimental about papa and Hesione and the old place I felt them calling to me

MAZZINI But what a very natural and kindly and charming human feeling, Lady Utterword!

LADY UTTERWORD So I thought, Mr Dunn But I know now that it was only the last of my influenza I found that I was not remembered and not wanted

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER You left because you did not want us Was there no heartbreak in that for your father? You tore yourself up by the roots; and the ground healed up and brought forth fresh plants and forgot

you What right had you to come back and probe old wounds?

MRS HUSHABYE You were a complete stranger to me at first, Addy, but now I feel as if you had never been away.

LADY UTTERWORD Thank you, Hesione; but the influenza is quite cured The place may be Heartbreak House to you, Miss Dunn, and to this gentleman from the city who seems to have so little self-control, but to me it is only a very ill-regulated and rather untidy villa without any stables

HECTOR Inhabited by—?

ELLIE A crazy old sea captain and a young singer who adores him

MRS HUSHABYE A sluttish female, trying to stave off a double chin and an elderly spread, vainly wooing a born soldier of freedom

MAZZINI Oh, really, Mrs Hushabye—

MANGAN A member of His Majesty's Government that everybody sets down as a nincompoop. dont forget him, Lady Utterword

LADY UTTERWORD And a very fascinating gentleman whose chief occupation is to be married to my sister.

HECTOR. All heartbroken imbeciles

MAZZINI Oh no Surely, if I may say so, rather a favorable specimen of what is best in our English culture You are very charming people, most advanced, unprejudiced, frank, humane, unconventional, democratic, free-thinking, and everything that is delightful to thoughtful people

MRS HUSHABYE. You do us proud, Mazzini.

MAZZINI I am not flattering, really Where else could I feel perfectly at ease in my pyjamas? I sometimes dream that I am in very distinguished society, and suddenly I have nothing on but my pyjamas! Sometimes I havnt even pyjamas And I always feel overwhelmed with confusion But here, I dont mind in the least it seems quite natural

LADY UTTERWORD An infallible sign that you are not now in really distinguished society, Mr Dunn. If you were in my house, you would feel embarrassed

MAZZINI I shall take particular care to keep out of your house, Lady Utterword

LADY UTTERWORD You will be quite wrong, Mr Dunn I should make you very comfortable; and you would not have the trouble and anxiety of wondering whether you should wear your purple and gold or your green and crimson dressing-gown at dinner You

the rocks, the splintering of her rotten timbers, the tearing of her rusty plates, the drowning of the crew like rats in a trap.

ELLIE Moral dont take rum

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*vehemently*] That is a lie, child Let a man drink ten barrels of rum a day, he is not a drunken skipper until he is a drifting skipper Whilst he can lay his course and stand on his bridge and steer it, he is no drunkard It is the man who lies drinking in his bunk and trusts to Providence that I call the drunken skipper, though he drank nothing but the waters of the River Jordan

ELLIE Splendid! And you havnt had a drop for an hour You see you dont need it, your own spirit is not dead

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Echoes nothing but echoes The last shot was fired years ago

HECTOR And this ship that we are all in? This soul's prison we call England?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditch-water, and the crew is gambling in the forecastle She will strike and sink and split Do you think the laws of God will be suspended in favor of England because you were born in it?

HECTOR Well, I dont mean to be drowned like a rat in a trap I still have the will to live What am I to do?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Do? Nothing simpler. Learn your business as an Englishman

HECTOR And what may my business as an Englishman be, pray?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. Navigation Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned

ELLIE Quiet, quiet youll tire yourself

MAZZINI I thought all that once, Captain; but I assure you nothing will happen

A dull distant explosion is heard

HECTOR [*starting up*] What was that?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Something happening [*He blows his whistle*] Breakers ahead!

The light goes out

HECTOR [*furiously*] Who put that light out? Who dared put that light out?

NURSE GUINNESS [*running in from the house to the middle of the esplanade*] I did, sir. The police have telephoned to say we'll be summoned if we dont put that light out it can be seen for miles

HECTOR It shall be seen for a hundred miles [*He dashes into the house*]

NURSE GUINNESS The rectory is nothing but a heap of bricks, they say Unless we can give the rector a bed he has nowhere to lay his

head this night

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER The Church is on the rocks, breaking up I told him it would unless it headed for God's open sea

NURSE GUINNESS And you are all to go down to the cellars

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Go there yourself, you and all the crew Batten down the hatches

NURSE GUINNESS And hide beside the coward I married! I'll go on the roof first [*The lamp lights up again*]. There! Mr Hushabye's turned it on again

THE BURGLAR [*hurrying in and appealing to Nurse Guinness*] Here wheres the way to that gravel pit? The boot-boy says theres a cave in the gravel pit Them cellars is no use. Wheres the gravel pit, Captain

NURSE GUINNESS Go straight on past the flagstaff until you fall into it and break your dirty neck. [*She pushes him contemptuously towards the flagstaff, and herself goes to the foot of the hammock and waits there, as it were by Ariadne's cradle*]

Another and louder explosion is heard. The burglar stops and stands trembling.

ELLIE [*rising*] That was nearer

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER The next one will get us [*He rises*] Stand by, all hands, for judgment

THE BURGLAR Oh my Lordy God! [*He rushes away frantically past the flagstaff into the gloom*].

MRS HUSHABYE [*emerging panting from the darkness*] Who was that running away? [*She comes to Ellie*] Did you hear the explosions? And the sound in the sky it's splendid it's like an orchestra it's like Beethoven.

ELLIE By thunder, Hesione it is Beethoven

She and Hesione throw themselves into one another's arms in wild excitement The light increases.

MAZZINI [*anxiously*] The light is getting brighter

NURSE GUINNESS [*looking up at the house*] It's Mr Hushabye turning on all the lights in the house and tearing down the curtains

RANDALL [*rushing in in his pyjamas, distractedly waving a flute*] Ariadne my soul, my precious, go down to the cellars I beg and implore you, go down to the cellars!

LADY UTTERWORD [*quite composed in her hammock*] The governor's wife in the cellars with the servants! Really, Randall!

RANDALL But what shall I do if you are

killed?

LADY UTTERWORD You will probably be killed, too, Randall Now play your flute to shew that you are not afraid, and be good Play us Keep the home fires burning

NURSE GUINNESS [*grimly*] They'll keep the homes fires burning for us them up there

RANDALL [*having tried to play*] My lips are trembling I can't get a sound

MAZZINI I hope poor Mangan is safe

MRS HUSHABYE He is hiding in the cave in the gravel pit

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER My dynamite drew him there It is the hand of God

HECTOR [*returning from the house and striding across to his former place*] There is not half light enough We should be blazing to the skies

ELLIE [*tense with excitement*] Set fire to the house, Marcus

MRS HUSHABYE My house! No

HECTOR I thought of that, but it would not be ready in time

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER The judgment has come Courage will not save you, but it will shew that your souls are still alive.

MRS HUSHABYE Sh-sh! Listen do you hear it now? It's magnificent

They all turn away from the house and look up, listening

HECTOR [*gravely*] Miss Dunn you can do no good here We of this house are only moths flying into the candle You had better go down to the cellar

ELLIE [*scornfully*] I don't think.

MAZZINI Ellie, dear, there is no disgrace in going to the cellar An officer would order his soldiers to take cover Mr Hushabye is behaving like an amateur Mangan and the burglar are acting very sensibly, and it is they who will survive

ELLIE Let them I shall behave like an amateur But why should you run any risk?

MAZZINI Think of the risk those poor fellows up there are running!

NURSE GUINNESS. Think of them, indeed,

the murdering blackguards! What next?

A terrific explosion shakes the earth They reel back into their seats, or clutch the nearest support They hear the falling of the shattered glass from the windows

MAZZINI Is anyone hurt?

HECTOR Where did it fall?

NURSE GUINNESS [*in hideous triumph*] Right in the gravel pit I seen it Serve un right! I seen it [*She runs away towards the gravel pit, laughing harshly*]

HECTOR One husband gone.

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Thirty pounds of good dynamite wasted.

MAZZINI Oh, poor Mangan!

HECTOR Are you immortal that you need pity him? Our turn next

They wait in silence and intense expectation Hesone and Ellie hold each other's hand tight A distant explosion is heard

MRS HUSHABYE [*relaxing her grip*] Oh! they have passed us.

LADY UTTERWORD The danger is over, Randall Go to bed

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER Turn in, all hands The ship is safe [*He sits down and goes asleep*]

ELLIE [*disappointedly*] Safe!

HECTOR [*disgustedly*] Yes, safe And how damnably dull the world has become again suddenly! [*He sits down*]

MAZZINI [*sitting down*] I was quite wrong, after all It is we who have survived, and Mangan and the burglar—

HECTOR —the two burglars—

LADY UTTERWORD —the two practical men of business—

MAZZINI —both gone And the poor clergyman will have to get a new house

MRS HUSHABYE But what a glorious experience! I hope they'll come again tomorrow night

ELLIE [*radiant at the prospect*] Oh, I hope so Randall at last succeeds in keeping the home fires burning on his flute

THE END

XXV

GREAT CATHERINE

(WHOM GLORY STILL ADORES)

THE FIRST SCENE

1776 *Patiomkin in his bureau in the Winter Palace, St Petersburg. Huge palatial apartment style, Russia in the XVIII century imitating the Versailles du Roi Soleil. Extravagant luxury. Also dirt and disorder.*

Patiomkin, gigantic in stature and build, his face marred by the loss of one eye and a marked squint in the other, sits at the end of a table littered with papers and the remains of three or four successive breakfasts. He has supplies of coffee and brandy at hand sufficient for a party of ten. His coat, encrusted with diamonds, is on the floor. It has fallen off a chair placed near the other end of the table for the convenience of visitors. His court sword, with its attachments, is on the chair. His three-cornered hat, also bejewelled, is on the table. He himself is half-dressed in an unfastened shirt and an immense dressing-gown, once gorgeous, now food-splashed and dirty, as it serves him for towel, handkerchief, duster, and every other use to which a textile fabric can be put by a slovenly man. It does not conceal his huge hairy chest, nor his half-buttoned knee breeches, nor his legs. These are partly clad in silk stockings, which he occasionally hitches up to his knees, and presently shakes down to his shins, by his restless movements. His feet are thrust into enormous slippers, worth, with their crust of jewels, several thousand roubles apiece.

Superficially Patiomkin is a violent, brutal barbarian, an upstart despot of the most intolerable and dangerous type, ugly, lazy, and disgusting in his personal habits. Yet ambassadors report him the ablest man in Russia, and the one who can do most with the still abler Empress Catherine II, who is not a Russian but a German, by no means barbarous or intemperate in her personal habits. She not only disputes with Frederick the Great the reputation of being the cleverest monarch in Europe, but may even put in a very plausible claim to be the cleverest and most attractive individual alive. Now she not only tolerates Patiomkin long after she has got over her first romantic attachment to him, but esteems him highly as a counsellor and a good friend. His love letters are among the best on record. He

has a wild sense of humor, which enables him to laugh at himself as well as at everybody else. In the eyes of the English visitor now about to be admitted to his presence he may be an outrageous ruffian. In fact he actually is an outrageous ruffian, in no matter whose eyes, but the visitor will find out, as everyone else sooner or later finds out, that he is a man to be reckoned with even by those who are not intimidated by his temper, bodily strength, and exalted rank.

A pretty young lady, Varinka, his favorite niece, is lounging on an ottoman between his end of the table and the door, very sulky and dissatisfied, perhaps because he is preoccupied with his papers and his brandy bottle, and she can see nothing of him but his broad back.

There is a screen behind the ottoman.

An old soldier, a Cossack sergeant, enters.

THE SERGEANT [*softly to the lady, holding the door handle*] Little darling honey is his Highness the prince very busy?

VARINKA His Highness the prince is very busy. He is singing out of tune, he is biting his nails; he is scratching his head; he is hitching up his untidy stockings; he is making himself disgusting and odious to everybody, and he is pretending to read state papers that he does not understand because he is too lazy and selfish to talk and be companionable.

PATIOMKIN [*growls, then wipes his nose with his dressing-gown*]

VARINKA Pig. Ugh! [*She curls herself up with a shiver of disgust and retires from the conversation*]

THE SERGEANT [*stealing across to the coat, and picking it up to replace it on the back of the chair*] Little Father the English captain, so highly recommended to you by old Fritz of Prussia, by the English ambassador, and by Monsieur Voltaire (whom [*crossing himself*] may God in his infinite mercy damn eternally!), is in the antechamber and desires audience.

PATIOMKIN [*deliberately*] To hell with the English captain; and to hell with old Fritz of Prussia, and to hell with the English ambassador, and to hell with Monsieur Voltaire, and to hell with you too!

THE SERGEANT Have mercy on me, Little Father Your head is bad this morning You drink too much French brandy and too little good Russian kvass

PATIOMKIN [*with sudden fury*] Why are visitors of consequence announced by a sergeant? [*Springing at him and seizing him by the throat*] What do you mean by this, you hound? Do you want five thousand blows of the stick? Where is General Volkonsky?

THE SERGEANT [*on his knees*] Little Father you kicked his Highness downstairs

PATIOMKIN [*flinging him down and kicking him*] You lie, you dog You lie

THE SERGEANT Little Father life is hard for the poor If you say it is a lie, it is a lie He fell downstairs I picked him up; and he kicked me They all kick me when you kick them God knows that is not just, Little Father!

PATIOMKIN [*laughs ogreishly, then returns to his place at the table, chuckling*]'''

VARINKA Savage! Boor! It is a disgrace No wonder the French sneer at us as barbarians

THE SERGEANT [*who has crept round the table to the screen, and insinuated himself between Patiomkin's back and Varinka*] Do you think the Prince will see the Captain, little darling?

PATIOMKIN He will not see any captain Go to the devil!

THE SERGEANT Be merciful, Little Father God knows it is your duty to see him! [*To Varinka*] Intercede for him and for me, beautiful little darling He has given me a rouble

PATIOMKIN Oh, send him in, send him in, and stop pestering me Am I never to have a moment's peace?

The Sergeant salutes joyfully and hurries out, divining that Patiomkin has intended to see the English captain all along, and has played this comedy of fury and exhausted impatience to conceal his interest in the visitor

VARINKA Have you no shame? You refuse to see the most exalted persons You kick princes and generals downstairs And then you see an English captain merely because he has given a rouble to that common soldier It is scandalous

PATIOMKIN Darling beloved, I am drunk, but I know what I am doing I wish to stand well with the English

VARINKA And you think you will impress

an Englishman by receiving him as you are now, half drunk?

PATIOMKIN [*gravely*] It is true the English despise men who cannot drink I must make myself wholly drunk [*He takes a huge draught of brandy*]

VARINKA Sot!

The Sergeant returns ushering a handsome strongly built young English officer in the uniform of a Light Dragoon He is evidently on fairly good terms with himself, and very sure of his social position He crosses the room to the end of the table opposite Patiomkin's, and awaits the civilities of that statesman with confidence The Sergeant remains prudently at the door

THE SERGEANT [*paternally*] Little Father this is the English captain, so well recommended to her sacred Majesty the Empress God knows, he needs your countenance and protec— [*He vanishes precipitately, seeing that Patiomkin is about to throw a bottle at him The Captain contemplates these preliminaries with astonishment, and with some displeasure, which is not allayed when Patiomkin, hardly condescending to look at his visitor, of whom he nevertheless takes stock with the corner of his one eye, says gruffly*] Well?

EDSTASTON My name is Edstaston Captain Edstaston of the Light Dragoons I have the honor to present to your Highness this letter from the British ambassador, which will give you all necessary particulars [*He hands Patiomkin the letter*]

PATIOMKIN [*tearing it open and glancing at it for about a second*] What do you want?

EDSTASTON The letter will explain to your Highness who I am

PATIOMKIN I don't want to know who you are What do you want?

EDSTASTON An audience of the Empress [*Patiomkin contemptuously throws the letter aside Edstaston adds hotly*] Also some civility, if you please

PATIOMKIN [*with derision*] Hol

VARINKA My uncle is receiving you with unusual civility, Captain He has just kicked a general downstairs

EDSTASTON A Russian general, madam?

VARINKA Of course

EDSTASTON I must allow myself to say madam, that your uncle had better not attempt to kick an English officer downstairs

PATIOMKIN You want me to kick you upstairs eh? You want an audience of the

Empress

EDSTASTON I have said nothing about kicking, sir If it comes to that, my boots shall speak for me Her Majesty has signified a desire to have news of the rebellion in America I have served against the rebels, and I am instructed to place myself at the disposal of her Majesty, and to describe the events of the war to her, as an eye-witness, in a discreet and agreeable manner

PATIOMKIN Psha! I know You think if she once sets eyes on your face and your uniform your fortune is made You think that if she could stand a man like me, with only one eye, and a cross eye at that, she must fall down at your feet at first sight, eh?

EDSTASTON [*shocked and indignant*] I think nothing of the sort, and I'll trouble you not to repeat it If I were a Russian subject and you made such a boast about my queen, I'd strike you across the face with my sword [*Patiomkin, with a yell of fury, rushes at him*] Hands off, you swine! [*As Patiomkin, towering over him, attempts to seize him by the throat, Edstaston, who is a bit of a wrestler, adroitly backheels him He falls, amazed, on his back*]

VARINKA [*rushing out*] Help! Call the guard! The Englishman is murdering my uncle! Help! Help!

The guard and the Sergeant rush in Edstaston draws a pair of small pistols from his boots, and points one at the Sergeant and the other at Patiomkin, who is sitting on the floor, somewhat sobered The soldiers stand irresolute

EDSTASTON Stand off [*To Patiomkin*] Order them off, if you dont want a bullet through your silly head

THE SERGEANT Little Father tell us what to do Our lives are yours, but God knows you are not fit to die

PATIOMKIN [*absurdly self-possessed*] Get out
THE SERGEANT Little Father—

PATIOMKIN [*roaring*] Get out Get out, all of you. [*They withdraw, much relieved at their escape from the pistol Patiomkin attempts to rise, and rolls over*] Here! help me up, will you? Dont you see that I'm drunk and cant get up?

EDSTASTON [*suspiciously*] You want to get hold of me

PATIOMKIN [*squatting resignedly against the chair on which his clothes hang*] Very well, then. I shall stay where I am, because I'm drunk and youre afraid of me.

EDSTASTON I'm not afraid of you, damn

you!

PATIOMKIN [*ecstatically*] Darling your lips are the gates of truth Now listen to me [*He marks off the items of his statement with ridiculous stiff gestures of his head and arms, imitating a puppet*] You are Captain What-hisname, and your uncle is the Earl of What-dyecallum, and your father is Bishop of Thingummybob, and you are a young man of the highest spr-promise (I told you I was drunk), educated at Cambridge, and got your step as captain in the field at the GLORIOUS battle of Bunker's Hill Invalided home from America at the request of Aunt Fanny, Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen All right, eh?

EDSTASTON How do you know all this?

PATIOMKIN [*crowing fantastically*] In er lerrer, darling, darling, darling, darling Lerrer you shewed me

EDSTASTON But you didnt read it

PATIOMKIN [*flapping his fingers at him grotesquely*] Only one eye, darling Cross eye Sees everything Read lerrer ince-ince-istastaneously Kindly give me vinegar borle Green borle On'y to sober me Too drunk to speak proply If you would be so kind, darling Green borle [*Edstaston, still suspicious, shakes his head and keeps his pistols ready*] Reach it myself [*He reaches behind him up to the table, and snatches at the green bottle, from which he takes a copious draught Its effect is appalling His wry faces and agonized belchings are so heartrending that they almost upset Edstaston When the victim at last staggers to his feet, he is a pale fragile nobleman, aged and quite sober, extremely dignified in manner and address, though shaken by his recent convulsions*] Young man it is not better to be drunk than sober; but it is happier Goodness is not happiness That is an epigram But I have overdone this I am too sober to be good company Let me redress the balance [*He takes a generous draught of brandy, and recovers his genialty*] Aha! Thats better And now listen, darling You must not come to Court with pistols in your boots

EDSTASTON I have found them useful.

PATIOMKIN Nonsense. I'm your friend You mistook my intention because I was drunk. Now that I am sober—in moderation—I will prove that I am your friend Have some diamonds [*Roaring*] Hullo there! Dogs, pigs! hullo!

The Sergeant comes in

THE SERGEANT God be praised, Little Father you are still spared to us

PATIOMKIN Tell them to bring some diamonds Plenty of diamonds And rubies Get out [*He aims a kick at the Sergeant, who flees*] Put up your pistols, darling I'll give you a pair with gold handgrips. I am your friend

EDSTASTON [*replacing the pistols in his boots rather unwillingly*] Your Highness understands that if I am missing, or if anything happens to me, there will be trouble

PATIOMKIN [*enthusiastically*] Call me darling

EDSTASTON It is not the English custom

PATIOMKIN You have no hearts, you English! [*Slapping his right breast*] Heart! Heart!

EDSTASTON Pardon, your Highness your heart is on the other side

PATIOMKIN [*surprised and impressed*] Is it? You are learned! You are a doctor! You English are wonderful! We are barbarians, drunken pigs Catherine does not know it, but we are Catherine's a German But I have given her a Russian heart [*He is about to slap himself again*]

EDSTASTON [*delicately*] The other side, your Highness

PATIOMKIN [*maudlin*] Darling a true Russian has a heart on both sides

The Sergeant enters carrying a goblet filled with precious stones

PATIOMKIN Get out [*He snatches the goblet and kicks the Sergeant out, not maliciously but from habit, indeed not noticing that he does it*] Darling have some diamonds Have a fistful [*He takes up a handful and lets them slip back through his fingers into the goblet, which he then offers to Edstaston*]

EDSTASTON Thank you I don't take presents

PATIOMKIN [*amazed*] You refuse!

EDSTASTON I thank your Highness, but it is not the custom for English gentlemen to take presents of that kind

PATIOMKIN Are you really an Englishman?

EDSTASTON [*bows*]

PATIOMKIN You are the first Englishman I ever saw refuse anything he could get [*He puts the goblet on the table, then turns again to Edstaston*] Listen, darling You are a wrestler a splendid wrestler You threw me on my back like magic, though I could lift you with one hand Darling you are a giant, a paladin

EDSTASTON [*complacently*] We wrestle rather well in my part of England

PATIOMKIN I have a Turk who is a wrestler a prisoner of war You shall wrestle with him for me I'll stake a million roubles on you

EDSTASTON [*incensed*] Damn you! do you take me for a prize-fighter? How dare you make me such a proposal?

PATIOMKIN [*with wounded feeling*] Darling there is no pleasing you Don't you like me?

EDSTASTON [*mollified*] Well, in a sort of way I do; though I don't know why I should But my instructions are that I am to see the Empress, and—

PATIOMKIN Darling you shall see the Empress A glorious woman, the greatest woman in the world But lemme give you piece 'vice—pah! still drunk They water my vinegar [*He shakes himself, clears his throat; and resumes soberly*] If Catherine takes a fancy to you, you may ask for roubles, diamonds, palaces, titles, orders, anything! and you may aspire to everything field-marshal, admiral, minister, what you please—except Tsar

EDSTASTON I tell you I don't want to ask for anything Do you suppose I am an adventurer and a beggar?

PATIOMKIN [*plaintively*] Why not, darling? I was an adventurer I was a beggar

EDSTASTON Oh, you!

PATIOMKIN Well what's wrong with me?

EDSTASTON You are a Russian That's different

PATIOMKIN [*effusively*] Darling I am a man, and you are a man, and Catherine is a woman Woman reduces us all to the common denominator [*Chuckling*] Again an epigram! [*Gravely*] You understand it, I hope Have you had a college education, darling? I have

EDSTASTON Certainly I am a Bachelor of Arts

PATIOMKIN It is enough that you are a bachelor, darling Catherine will supply the arts Aha! Another epigram? I am in the vein today

EDSTASTON [*embarrassed and a little offended*] I must ask your Highness to change the subject As a visitor in Russia, I am the guest of the Empress, and I must tell you plainly that I have neither the right nor the disposition to speak lightly of her Majesty

PATIOMKIN You have conscientious scruples?

EDSTASTON I have the scruples of a gentleman.

PATIOMKIN. In Russia a gentleman has no scruples In Russia we face facts.

EDSTASTON In England, sir, a gentleman never faces any facts if they are unpleasant facts

PATIOMKIN. In real life, darling, all facts are unpleasant [*Greatly pleased with himself*] Another epigram! Where is my accursed chancellor? these gems should be written down and recorded for posterity [*He rushes to the table, sits down, and snatches up a pen Then, recollecting himself*] But I have not asked you to sit down [*He rises and goes to the other chair*] I am a savage a barbarian. [*He throws the shirt and coat over the table on to the floor and puts his sword on the table*] Be seated, Captain

EDSTASTON Thank you.

They bow to one another ceremoniously Patiomkin's tendency to grotesque exaggeration costs him his balance he nearly falls over Edstaston, who rescues him and takes the proffered chair

PATIOMKIN [*resuming his seat*] By the way, what was the piece of advice I was going to give you?

EDSTASTON. As you did not give it, I dont know. Allow me to add that I have not asked for your advice

PATIOMKIN I give it to you unasked, delightful Englishman I remember it now It was this Dont try to become Tsar of Russia.

EDSTASTON [*in astonishment*] I havnt the slightest intention—

PATIOMKIN Not now, but you will have take my word for it It will strike you as a splendid idea to have conscientious scruples—to desire the blessing of the Church on your union with Catherine

EDSTASTON [*rising in utter amazement*] My union with Catherine! Youre mad

PATIOMKIN [*unmoved*] The day you hint at such a thing will be the day of your downfall Besides, it is not lucky to be Catherine's husband. You know what happened to Peter?

EDSTASTON [*shortly sitting down again*] I do not wish to discuss it

PATIOMKIN You think she murdered him?

EDSTASTON I know that people have said so

PATIOMKIN [*thunderously springing to his feet*] It is a lie Orloff murdered him [*Subsiding a little*] He also knocked my eye out, but [*sitting down placidly*] I succeeded him

for all that. And [*patting Edstaston's hand very affectionately*] I'm sorry to say, darling, that if you become Tsar, I shall murder you

EDSTASTON [*ironically returning the caress*] Thank you The occasion will not arise [*Rising*] I have the honour to wish your Highness good morning

PATIOMKIN [*jumping up and stopping him on his way to the door*] Tut tut! I'm going to take you to the Empress now, this very instant

EDSTASTON In these boots? Impossible! I must change

PATIOMKIN Nonsense! You shall come just as you are You shall shew her your calves later on

EDSTASTON But it will take me only half an hour to—

PATIOMKIN In half an hour it will be too late for the *petit lever*. Come along Damn it, man, I must oblige the British ambassador, and the French ambassador, and old Fritz, and Monsieur Voltaire and the rest of them [*He shouts rudely to the door*] Varinka! [*To Edstaston, with tears in his voice*] Varinka shall persuade you nobody can refuse Varinka anything My niece A treasure, I assure you Beautiful! devoted! fascinating! [*Shouting again*] Varinka where the devil are you?

VARINKA [*returning*] I'll not be shouted for You have the voice of a bear, and the manners of a tinker

PATIOMKIN Tsh-sh-sh Little angel Mother you must behave yourself before the English captain [*He takes off his dressing-gown and throws it over the papers and the breakfasts, picks up his coat, and disappears behind the screen to complete his toilette*]

EDSTASTON Madam! [*He bows*]

VARINKA [*curtseying*] Monsieur le Capitaine!

EDSTASTON I must apologize for the disturbance I made, madam

PATIOMKIN [*behind the screen*] You must not call her madam You must call her little Mother, and beautiful darling

EDSTASTON My respect for the lady will not permit it

VARINKA Respect! How can you respect the niece of a savage?

EDSTASTON [*deprecating*] Oh, madam!

VARINKA Heaven is my witness, Little English Father, we need someone who is not afraid of him He is so strong! I hope you will throw him down on the floor many, many, many times.

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

PATIONKIN [*behind the screen*] Varinka!

VARINKA Yes?

PATIONKIN Go and look through the keyhole of the Imperial bed-chamber, and bring me word whether the Empress is awake yet

VARINKA Fi done! I do not look through keyholes

PATIONKIN [*emerging, having arranged his shirt and put on his diamonded coat*] You have been badly brought up, little darling! Would any lady or gentleman walk unannounced into a room without first looking through the keyhole? [*Taking his sword from the table and putting it on*] The great thing in life is to be simple, and the perfectly simple thing is to look through keyholes! Another epigram the fifth this morning! Where is my fool of a chancellor? Where is Popof?

EDSTASTON [*choking with suppressed laughter*]!!!

PATIONKIN [*gratified*] Darling you appreciate my epigram

EDSTASTON Excuse me Pop off! Ha! ha! I cant help laughing! Whats his real name, by the way, in case I meet him?

VARINKA [*surprised*] His real name? Popof, of course! Why do you laugh, Little Father?

EDSTASTON How can anyone with a sense of humor help laughing? Pop off! [*He is convulsed*]

VARINKA [*looking at her uncle, taps her forehead significantly*]!

PATIONKIN [*aside to Varinka*] No only English! He will amuse Catherine! [*To Edstaston*] Come! you shall tell the joke to the Empress! she is by way of being a humorist! [*He takes him by the arm, and leads him towards the door*]

EDSTASTON [*resisting*] No, really I am not fit—

PATIONKIN Persuade him, Little angel Mother

VARINKA [*taking his other arm*] Yes, yes, yes, Little English Father! God knows it is your duty to be brave and wait on the Empress! Come!

EDSTASTON No I had rather—

PATIONKIN [*hauling him along*] Come, Varinka [*pulling him and coaxing him*] Come, little love! you cant refuse me!

EDSTASTON But how can I?

PATIONKIN Why not? She wont eat you!

VARINKA She will, but you must come!

EDSTASTON I assure you—it is quite out of the question—my clothes!

VARINKA You look perfect!

PATIONKIN Come along, darling!

EDSTASTON [*struggling*] Impossible—

VARINKA Come, come, come!

EDSTASTON No! Believe me—I dont wish—

VARINKA Carry him, uncle!

PATIONKIN [*lifting him in his arms like a father carrying a little boy*] Yes I'll carry you!

EDSTASTON Dash it all, this is ridiculous!

VARINKA [*seizing his ankles and dancing as he is carried out*] You must come! If you kick you will blacken my eyes!

PATIONKIN Come, baby, come!

By this time they have made their way through the door and are out of hearing

THE SECOND SCENE

The Empress's petit lever The central doors are closed! Those who enter through them find on their left on a dais of two broad steps, a magnificent curtained bed! Beyond it a door in the panelling leads to the Empress's cabinet! Near the foot of the bed, in the middle of the room, stands a gilt chair, with the Imperial arms carved and the Imperial monogram embroidered!

The Court is in attendance, standing in two melancholy rows down the side of the room opposite to the bed, solemn, bored, waiting for the Empress to awaken! The Princess Dashkoff, with two ladies, stands a little in front of the line of courtiers, by the Imperial chair! Silence, broken only by the yawns and whispers of the courtiers! Naryshkin, the Chamberlain, stands by the head of the bed!

A loud yawn is heard from behind the curtains!

NARYSHKIN [*holding up a warning hand*] Ssh!

The courtiers hastily cease whispering, dress up their lines, and stiffen! Dead silence! A bell tinkles within the curtains! Naryshkin and the Princess solemnly draw them and reveal the Empress!

Catherine turns over on her back, and stretches herself!

CATHERINE [*yawning*] Heigho—ah—yah—ah—ow—what o'clock is it? [*Her accent is German*]

NARYSHKIN [*formally*] Her Imperial Majesty is awake! [*The Court falls on its knees*]

ALL Good morning to your Majesty!

NARYSHKIN Half-past ten, Little Mother!

CATHERINE [*sitting up abruptly*] Potztausend! [*Contemplating the kneeling courtiers*] Oh, get up, get up! [*All rise*] Your etiquette bores me! I am

hardly awake in the morning before it begins [*Yawning again and relapsing sleepily against her pillows*] Why do they do it, Naryshkin?

NARYSHKIN God knows it is not for your sake, Little Mother. But you see if you were not a great queen they would all be nobodies.

CATHERINE [*sitting up*] They make me do it to keep up their own little dignities? So?

NARYSHKIN. Exactly. Also because if they didn't you might have them flogged, dear Little Mother.

CATHERINE [*springing energetically out of bed and seating herself on the edge of it*] Flogged! I! A Liberal Empress! A philosopher! You are a barbarian, Naryshkin. [*She rises and turns to the courtiers*] And then, as if I cared! [*She turns again to Naryshkin*] You should know by this time that I am frank and original in character, like an Englishman. [*She walks about restlessly*] No, what maddens me about all this ceremony is that I am the only person in Russia who gets no fun out of my being Empress. You all glory in me, you bask in my smiles, you get titles and honors and favors from me, you are dazzled by my crown and my robes, you feel splendid when you have been admitted to my presence, and when I say a gracious word to you, you talk about it to everyone you meet for a week afterwards. But what do I get out of it? Nothing. [*She throws herself into the chair Naryshkin deprecates with a gesture, she hurls an emphatic repetition at him*] Nothing!! I wear a crown until my neck aches. I stand looking majestic until I am ready to drop. I have to smile at ugly old ambassadors and frown and turn my back on young and handsome ones. Nobody gives me anything. When I was only an Archduchess, the English ambassador used to give me money whenever I wanted it—or rather whenever he wanted to get anything out of my sacred predecessor Elizabeth [*the Court bows to the ground*], but now that I am Empress he never gives me a kopek. When I have headaches and colics I envy the scullerymaids. And you are not a bit grateful to me for all my care of you, my work, my thought, my fatigue, my sufferings.

THE PRINCESS DASHKOFF God knows, Little Mother, we all implore you to give your wonderful brain a rest. That is why you get headaches. Monsieur Voltaire also has headaches. His brain is just like yours.

CATHERINE Dashkoff, what a liar you are! [*Dashkoff curtsies with impressive dignity*] And

you think you are flattering me! Let me tell you I would not give a rouble to have the brains of all the philosophers in France. What is our business for today?

NARYSHKIN The new museum, Little Mother. But the model will not be ready until tonight.

CATHERINE [*rising eagerly*] Yes, the museum. An enlightened capital should have a museum. [*She paces the chamber with a deep sense of the importance of the museum*] It shall be one of the wonders of the world. I must have specimens, specimens, specimens, specimens.

NARYSHKIN You are in high spirits this morning, Little Mother.

CATHERINE [*with sudden levity*] I am always in high spirits, even when people do not bring me my slippers. [*She runs to the chair and sits down, thrusting her feet out*]

The two ladies rush to her feet, each carrying a slipper. Catherine, about to put her feet into them, is checked by a disturbance in the ante-chamber.

PATIOMKIN [*carrying Edstaston through the ante-chamber*] Useless to struggle. Come along, beautiful baby, darling. Come to Little Mother. [*He sings*]

March him baby,

Baby, baby,

Little ba-by bumpkins.

VARINKA [*joining in to the same doggerel in canon, a third above*] March him, baby, etc, etc.

EDSTASTON [*trying to make himself heard*] No, no. This is carrying a joke too far. I must insist. Let me down! Hang it, will you let me down! Confound it! No, no. Stop playing the fool, will you? We don't understand this sort of thing in England. I shall be disgraced. Let me down.

CATHERINE [*meanwhile*] What a horrible noise! Naryshkin, see what it is.

Naryshkin goes to the door.

CATHERINE [*listening*] That is Prince Patiomkin.

NARYSHKIN [*calling from the door*] Little Mother, a stranger.

Catherine plunges into bed again and covers herself up. Patiomkin, followed by Varinka, carries Edstaston in, dumps him down on the foot of the bed, and staggers past it to the cabinet door. Varinka joins the courtiers at the opposite side of the room. Catherine, blazing with wrath, pushes Edstaston off her bed on to the

floor, gets out of bed, and turns on Patiomkin with so terrible an expression that all kneel down hastily except Edstaston, who is sprawling on the carpet in angry confusion

CATHERINE Patiomkin how dare you? [Looking at Edstaston] What is this?

PATIOMKIN [on his knees tearfully] I don't know I am drunk. What is this, Varinka?

EDSTASTON [scrambling to his feet] Madam this drunken ruffian—

PATIOMKIN That true Drungn ruffian Took dvantage of my being drunk. Said take me to Lil angel Mother Take me to beauff Empress Take me to the grea'st woman on earth. That whas he said I took him I was wrong I am not sober

CATHERINE Men have grown sober in Siberia for less, Prince

PATIOMKIN Serve em right! Sgusting habit Ask Varinka

Catherine turns her face from him to the Court. The courtiers see that she is trying not to laugh, and know by experience that she will not succeed. They rise, relieved and grinning

VARINKA It is true He drinks like a pig

PATIOMKIN [plaintively] No not like a pig Like prince Lil Mother made poor Patiomkin prince Whas use being prince if I maynt drink?

CATHERINE [biting her lips] Go I am offended

PATIOMKIN Dont scold, Ll Mother

CATHERINE [imperiously] Go

PATIOMKIN [rising unsteadily] Yes go Go bye bye Very sleepy Berr go bye bye than go Siberia Go bye bye in Lil Mother's bed [He pretends to make an attempt to get into the bed]

CATHERINE [energetically pulling him back] No, no! Patiomkin! What are you thinking of? [He falls like a log on the floor, apparently dead drunk]

THE PRINCESS DASHKOFF Scandalous! An insult to your Imperial Majesty!

CATHERINE Dashkoff you have no sense of humor [She steps down to the floor level and looks indulgently at Patiomkin. He gurgles brutishly. She has an impulse of disgust] Hog [She kicks him as hard as she can] Oh! You have broken my toe Brute Beast Dashkoff is quite right Do you hear?

PATIOMKIN If you ask my pi-pinion of Dashkoff, my pipinion is that Dashkoff is drunk. Scanlous Poor Patiomkin go bye bye [He relapses into drunken slumbers]

Some of the courtiers move to carry him away

CATHERINE [stopping them] Let him lie Let him sleep it off If he goes out it will be to a tavern and low company for the rest of the day [Indulgently] There! [She takes a pillow from the bed and puts it under his head, then turns to Edstaston, surveys him with perfect dignity, and asks, in her queenliest manner] Varinka who is this gentleman?

VARINKA A foreign captain I cannot pronounce his name I think he is mad He came to the Prince and said he must see your Majesty He can talk of nothing else We could not prevent him

EDSTASTON [overwhelmed by this apparent betrayal] Oh! Madam I am perfectly sane I am actually an Englishman I should never have dreamt of approaching your Majesty without the fullest credentials I have letters from the English ambassador, from the Prussian ambassador [Naively] But everybody assured me that Prince Patiomkin is all-powerful with your Majesty, so I naturally applied to him

PATIOMKIN [interrupts the conversation by an agonized wheezing groan, as of a donkey beginning to bray]"

CATHERINE [like a fishfag] Schweig, du Hund [Resuming her impressive Royal manner] Have you never been taught, sir, how a gentleman should enter the presence of a sovereign

EDSTASTON Yes, Madam, but I did not enter your presence I was carried

CATHERINE But you say you asked the Prince to carry you

EDSTASTON Certainly not, Madam I protested against it with all my might. I appeal to this lady to confirm me

VARINKA [pretending to be indignant] Yes you protested But, all the same, you were very very very anxious to see her Imperial Majesty You blushed when the Prince spoke of her You threatened to strike him across the face with your sword because you thought he did not speak enthusiastically enough of her [To Catherine] Trust me he has seen your Imperial Majesty before

CATHERINE [to Edstaston] You have seen us before?

EDSTASTON At the review, Madam

VARINKA [triumphantly] Aha! I knew it. Your Majesty wore the hussar uniform He saw how radiant! how splendid! your Majesty looked. Oh! he has dared to admire your Majesty. Such insolence is not to be endured

EDSTASTON All Europe is a party to that insolence, Madam

THE PRINCESS DASHKOFF. All Europe is content to do so at a respectful distance. It is possible to admire her Majesty's policy and her eminence in literature and philosophy without performing acrobatic feats in the Imperial bed

EDSTASTON I know nothing about her Majesty's eminence in policy or philosophy I don't pretend to understand such things I speak as a practical man And I never knew that foreigners had any policy I always thought that policy was Mr Pitt's business

CATHERINE [*lifting her eyebrows*] So?

VARINKA What else did you presume to admire her Majesty for, pray?

EDSTASTON [*addled*] Well, I—I—I—that is, I— [*He stammers himself dumb*]

CATHERINE [*after a pitiless silence*] We are waiting for your answer

EDSTASTON But I never said I admired your Majesty The lady has twisted my words

VARINKA You don't admire her, then?

EDSTASTON Well, I—naturally—of course, I can't deny that the uniform was very becoming—perhaps a little unfeminine—still—

Dead silence Catherine and the Court watch him stonily He is wretchedly embarrassed

CATHERINE [*with cold majesty*] Well, sir, is that all you have to say?

EDSTASTON. Surely there is no harm in noticing that er—that er— [*He stops again*]

CATHERINE Noticing that er—? [*He gazes at her, speechless, like a fascinated rabbit She repeats fiercely*] That er—?

EDSTASTON [*startled into speech*] Well, that your Majesty was—was— [*Soothingly*] Well, let me put it this way that it was rather natural for a man to admire your Majesty without being a philosopher

CATHERINE [*suddenly smiling and extending her hand to him to be kissed*] Courtier!

EDSTASTON [*kissing it*] Not at all Your Majesty is very good I have been very awkward, but I did not intend it I am rather stupid, I am afraid

CATHERINE Stupid! By no means Courage, Captain we are pleased [*He falls on his knee She takes his cheeks in her hands, turns up his face; and adds*] We are greatly pleased [*She slaps his cheek coquettishly, he bows almost to his knee*] The *petit lever* is over [*She turns to*

go into the cabinet, and stumbles against the supine Patiomkin] Ach! [*Edstaston springs to her assistance, seizing Patiomkin's heels and shifting him out of the Empress's path*] We thank you, Captain

He bows gallantly, and is rewarded by a very gracious smile Then Catherine goes into her cabinet, followed by the Princess Dashkoff, who turns at the door to make a deep curtsy to Edstaston

VARINKA. Happy Little Father! Remember I did this for you [*She runs out after the Empress*]

Edstaston, somewhat dazed, crosses the room to the courtiers, and is received with marked deference, each courtier making him a profound bow or curtsy before withdrawing through the central doors He returns each obeisance with a nervous jerk, and turns away from it, only to find another courtier bowing at the other side The process finally reduces him to distraction, as he bumps into one in the act of bowing to another and then has to bow his apologies But at last they are all gone except Naryshkin

EDSTASTON Ouf!

PATIOMKIN [*jumping up vigorously*] You have done it, darling Superbly! Beautifully!

EDSTASTON [*astonished*] Do you mean to say you are not drunk?

PATIOMKIN. Not dead drunk, darling Only diplomatically drunk As a drunken hog, I have done for you in five minutes what I could not have done in five months as a sober man Your fortune is made She likes you

EDSTASTON The devil she does!

PATIOMKIN Why? Arnt you delighted?

EDSTASTON Delighted! Gracious heavens man, I am engaged to be married

PATIOMKIN What matter? She is in England, isn't she?

EDSTASTON No. She has just arrived in St Petersburg

THE PRINCESS DASHKOFF [*returning*] Captain Edstaston the Empress is robed, and commands your presence

EDSTASTON Say I was gone before you arrived with the message [*He hurries out. The other three, too taken aback to stop him, stare after him in the utmost astonishment*]

NARYSHKIN [*turning from the door*] She will have him knouted He is a dead man.

THE PRINCESS DASHKOFF But what am I to do? I cannot take such an answer to the Empress

Little Mother.

CLAIRE. You wretch! Help! Help! Police! We are being murdered Help!

The Sergeant, who has risen, comes to Naryshkin's rescue, and grasps Claire's hands, enabling Naryshkin to gag her again. By this time Edstaston and his captors are all rolling on the ground together. They get Edstaston on his back and fasten his wrists together behind his knees. Next they put a broad strap round his ribs. Finally they pass a pole through this breast strap and through the wrist strap and lift him by it, helplessly trussed up, to carry him off. Meantime he is by no means suffering in silence.

EDSTASTON [gasping] You shall hear more of this. Damn you, will you untie me? I will complain to the ambassador. I will write to the Gazette. England will blow your trumpet little fleet out of the water and sweep your tinpot army into Siberia for this. Will you let me go? Damn you! Curse you! What the devil do you mean by it? I'll—I'll—I'll—
[He is carried out of hearing]

NARYSHKIN [snatching his hands from Claire's face with a scream, and shaking his finger frantically] Agh! [The Sergeant, amazed, lets go her hands] She has bitten me, the little vixen

CLAIRE [spitting and wiping her mouth disgustedly] How dare you put your dirty paws on my mouth? Ugh! Psha!

THE SERGEANT. Be merciful, Little angel Mother

CLAIRE. Do not presume to call me your little angel mother. Where are the police?

NARYSHKIN. We are the police in St Petersburg, little spitfire.

THE SERGEANT. God knows we have no orders to harm you, Little Mother. Our duty is done. You are well and strong; but I shall never be the same man again. He is a mighty and terrible fighter, as stout as a bear. He has broken my sweetbread with his strong knees. God knows poor folk should not be set upon such dangerous adversaries!

CLAIRE. Serve you right! Where have they taken Captain Edstaston to?

NARYSHKIN [spitefully] To the Empress, little beauty. He has insulted the Empress. He will receive a hundred and one blows of the knout. [He laughs and goes out, nursing his bitten finger]

THE SERGEANT. He will feel only the first twenty, and he will be mercifully dead long before the end, little darling.

CLAIRE [sustained by an invincible snobbery] They dare not touch an English officer. I will go to the Empress myself. she cannot know who Captain Edstaston is—who we are

THE SERGEANT. Do so in the name of the Holy Nicholas, little beauty

CLAIRE. Don't be impertinent. How can I get admission to the palace?

THE SERGEANT. Everybody goes in and out of the palace, little love

CLAIRE. But I must get into the Empress's presence. I must speak to her.

THE SERGEANT. You shall, dear Little Mother. You shall give the poor old Sergeant a rouble, and the blessed Nicholas will make your salvation his charge

CLAIRE [impetuously] I will give you [she is about to say fifty roubles, but checks herself cautiously]—Well. I don't mind giving you two roubles if I can speak to the Empress

THE SERGEANT [joyfully] I praise Heaven for you, Little Mother. Come. [He leads the way out] It was the temptation of the devil that led your young man to bruise my vitals and deprive me of breath. We must be merciful to one another's faults

THE FOURTH SCENE

A triangular recess communicating by a heavily curtained arch with the huge ballroom of the palace. The light is subdued by red shades on the candles. In the wall adjoining that pierced by the arch is a door. The only piece of furniture is a very handsome chair on the arch side. In the ballroom they are dancing a polonaise to the music of a brass band.

Naryshkin enters through the door, followed by the soldiers carrying Edstaston, still trussed to the pole. Exhausted and dogged, he makes no sound.

NARYSHKIN. Halt. Get that pole clear of the prisoner. [They dump Edstaston on the floor, and detach the pole. Naryshkin stoops over him and addresses him insultingly] Well! are you ready to be tortured? This is the Empress's private torture chamber. Can I do anything to make you quite comfortable? You have only to mention it

EDSTASTON. Have you any back teeth?

NARYSHKIN [surprised] Why?

EDSTASTON. His Majesty King George the Third will send for six of them when the news of this reaches London; so look out, damn your eyes!

NARYSHKIN [*frightened*] Oh, I assure you I am only obeying my orders Personally I abhor torture, and would save you if I could But the Empress is proud, and what woman would forgive the slight you put upon her?

EDSTASTON As I said before Damn your eyes!

NARYSHKIN [*almost in tears*] Well, it isn't my fault [*To the soldiers, insolently*] You know your orders? You remember what you have to do when the Empress gives you the word? [*The soldiers salute in assent*]

Naryshkin passes through the curtains, admitting a blare of music and a strip of the brilliant white candle-light from the chandeliers in the ballroom as he does so The white light vanishes and the music is muffled as the curtains fall together behind him Presently the band stops abruptly, and Naryshkin comes back through the curtains He makes a warning gesture to the soldiers, who stand at attention Then he moves the curtain to allow Catherine to enter She is in full Imperial regalia, and stops sternly just where she has entered The soldiers fall on their knees

CATHERINE Obey your orders
The soldiers seize Edstaston, and throw him roughly at the feet of the Empress

CATHERINE [*looking down coldly on him*] Also [*the German word*], you have put me to the trouble of sending for you twice You had better have come the first time

EDSTASTON [*exasperate, and pettishly angry*] I havnt come either time I've been carried I call it infernal impudence

CATHERINE Take care what you say

EDSTASTON No use I daresay you look very majestic and very handsome, but I cant see you, and I am not intimidated I am an Englishman, and you can kidnap me, but you cant bully me

NARYSHKIN Remember to whom you are speaking

CATHERINE [*violently, furious at his intrusion*] Remember that dogs should be dumb [*He shrivels*] And do you, Captain, remember that famous as I am for my clemency, there are limits to the patience even of an Empress

EDSTASTON How is a man to remember anything when he is trussed up in this ridiculous fashion? I can hardly breathe [*He makes a futile struggle to free himself*] Here dont be unkind, your Majesty tell these fellows to unstrap me You know you really owe me an apology

CATHFRINF You think you can escape by appealing, like Prince Patlomkin, to my sense of humor?

EDSTASTON Sense of humor! Ho! Ha, ha! I like that. Would anybody with a sense of humor make a guy of a man like this, and then expect him to take it seriously? I say, do tell them to loosen these straps

CATHERINE [*seating herself*] Why should I, pray?

EDSTASTON Why! Why!! Why, because theyre hurting me

CATHFRINF Peoplesometimes learn through suffering Manners, for instance

EDSTASTON Oh, well, of course, if youre an ill-natured woman, hurting me on purpose, I have nothing more to say

CATHFRINF A monarch, sir, has sometimes to employ a necessary and salutary severity—

EDSTASTON [*interrupting her petulantly*] Quack! quack! quack!

CATHERINE Donnerwetter!

EDSTASTON [*continuing recklessly*] This isnt severity it's tomfoolery And if you think it's reforming my character or teaching me anything, youre mistaken It may be a satisfaction to you, but if it is, all I can say is that it's not an amiable satisfaction

CATHERINE [*turning suddenly and balefully on Naryshkin*] What are you grinning at?

NARYSHKIN [*falling on his knees in terror*] Be merciful, Little Mother My heart is in my mouth

CATHERINE Your heart and your mouth will be in two separate parts of your body if you again forget in whose presence you stand Go And take your men with you [*Naryshkin crawls to the door The soldiers rise*] Stop Roll that [*indicating Edstaston*] nearer [*The soldiers obey*] Not so close Did I ask you for a footstool? [*She pushes Edstaston away with her foot*]

EDSTASTON [*with a sudden squeal*] Agh!!! I must really ask your Majesty not to put the point of your Imperial toe between my ribs I am ticklesome

CATHERINE Indeed? All the more reason for you to treat me with respect, Captain [*To the others*] Begone How many times must I give an order before it is obeyed?

NARYSHKIN Little Mother they have brought some instruments of torture Will they be needed?

CATHERINE [*indignantly*] How dare you

name such abominations to a Liberal Empress? You will always be a savage and a fool, Naryshkin These relics of barbarism are buried, thank God, in the grave of Peter the Great My methods are more civilized [*She extends her toe towards Edstaston's ribs*].

EDSTASTON [*shrieking hysterically*] Yagh! Ah! [*Furiously*] If your Majesty does that again I will write to the London Gazette.

CATHERINE [*to the soldiers*] Leave us Quick! do you hear? Five thousand blows of the stick for the soldier who is in the room when I speak next [*The soldiers rush out*] Naryshkin are you waiting to be knouted? [*Naryshkin backs out hastily*]

Catherine and Edstaston are now alone Catherine has in her hand a sceptre or baton of gold Wrapped round it is a new pamphlet, in French, entitled L'Homme aux Quarante Écus She calmly unrolls this and begins to read it at her ease as if she were quite alone Several seconds elapse in dead silence She becomes more and more absorbed in the pamphlet, and more and more amused by it

CATHERINE [*greatly pleased by a passage, and turning over the leaf*] Ausgezeichnet!

EDSTASTON Ahem!

Silence Catherine reads on

CATHERINE Wie komisch!

EDSTASTON. Ahem! ahem!

Silence

CATHERINE [*soliloquizing enthusiastically*] What a wonderful author is Monsieur Voltaire! How lucidly he exposes the folly of this crazy plan for raising the entire revenue of the country from a single tax on land! how he withers it with his irony! how he makes you laugh whilst he is convincing you! how sure one feels that the proposal is killed by his wit and economic penetration killed never to be mentioned again among educated people!

EDSTASTON For Heaven's sake, Madam, do you intend to leave me tied up like this while you discuss the blasphemies of that abominable infidel? Agh!! [*She has again applied her toe*] Oh! Oo!

CATHERINE [*calmly*] Do I understand you to say that Monsieur Voltaire is a great philanthropist and a great philosopher as well as the wittiest man in Europe?

EDSTASTON. Certainly not. I say that his books ought to be burnt by the common hangman [*Her toe touches his ribs*] Yagh! Oh dont I shall faint. I cant bear it.

CATHERINE Have you changed your opinion of Monsieur Voltaire?

EDSTASTON But you cant expect me as a member of the Church of England [*she tickles him*—Agh! Ow! Oh Lord! he is anything you like He is a philanthropist, a philosopher, a beauty he ought to have a statue, damn him! [*She tickles him*] No! bless him! save him victorious, happy and glorious! Oh, let eternal honors crown his name. Voltaire thrice worthy on the rolls of fame! [*Exhausted*] Now will you let me up? And look here! I can see your ankles when you tickle me it's not ladylike

CATHERINE [*sticking out her toe and admiring it critically*] Is the spectacle so disagreeable?

EDSTASTON. It's agreeable enough, only [*with intense expression*] for heaven's sake dont touch me in the ribs

CATHERINE [*putting aside the pamphlet*] Captain Edstaston why did you refuse to come when I sent for you?

EDSTASTON Madam: I cannot talk tied up like this

CATHERINE Do you still admire me as much as you did this morning?

EDSTASTON How can I possibly tell when I cant see you? Let me get up and look I cant see anything now except my toes and yours

CATHERINE Do you still intend to write to the London Gazette about me?

EDSTASTON Not if you will loosen these straps Quick loosen me I'm fainting

CATHERINE I dont think you are [*tickling him*]

EDSTASTON Agh! Cat!

CATHERINE What [*she tickles him again*!]

EDSTASTON [*with a shriek*] No angel, angel!

CATHERINE [*tenderly*] Geliebter!

EDSTASTON I dont know a word of German, but that sounded kind. [*Becoming hysterical*] Little Mother, beautiful little darling angel mother. dont be cruel. untie me Oh, I beg and implore you. Dont be unkind I shall go mad

CATHERINE You are expected to go mad with love when an Empress deigns to interest herself in you When an Empress allows you to see her foot you should kiss it Captain Edstaston you are a booby

EDSTASTON [*indignantly*] I am nothing of the kind. I have been mentioned in dispatches as a highly intelligent officer And let me warn your Majesty that I am not so

helpless as you think The English Ambassador is in that ballroom A shout from me will bring him to my side, and then where will your Majesty be?

CATHFRINE I should like to see the English Ambassador or anyone else pass through that curtain against my orders It might be a stone wall ten feet thick Shout your loudest Sob Curse Scream Yell [*She tickles him unmercifully*]

EDSTASTON [*frantically*] Ahow yow!!! Agh! Ooh! Stop! Oh Lord! Ya-a-n-ah! [*A tumult in the ballroom responds to his cries*]

VOICES FROM THE BALLROOM Stand back You cannot pass Hold her back there The Empress's orders It is out of the question No, little darling, not in there Nobody is allowed in there. You will be sent to Siberia Dont let her through there, on your life Drag her back You will be knouted It is hopeless, Mademoiselle you must obey orders Guard there! Send some men to hold her

CLAIRE'S VOICE Let me go They are torturing Charles in there I will go How can you all dance as if nothing was happening? Let me go, I tell you Let—me—go [*She dashes through the curtain No one dares follow her*]

CATHERINE [*rising in wrath*] How dare you?

CLAIRE [*recklessly*] Oh, dare your grandmother! Where is my Charles? What are they doing to him?

EDSTASTON [*shouting*] Claire loosen these straps, in Heaven's name Quick.

CLAIRE [*seeing him and throwing herself on her knees at his side*] Oh, how dare they tie you up like that! [*To Catherine*] You wicked wretch! You Russian savage! [*She pounces on the straps, and begins unbuckling them*]

CATHERINE [*conquering herself with a mighty effort*] Now self-control Self-control, Catherine Philosophy Europe is looking on [*She forces herself to sit down*]

EDSTASTON Steady, dearest it is the Empress Call her your Imperial Majesty Call her Star of the North, Little Mother, Little Darling thats what she likes; but get the straps off

CLAIRE Keep quiet, dear I cannot get them off if you move

CATHERINE [*calmly*] Keep quite still, Captain [*She tickles him*]

EDSTASTON Owl! Agh! Ahow yow!

CLAIRE [*stopping dead in the act of unbuckling*

the straps and turning sick with jealousy as she grasps the situation] Was that what I thought was your being tortured?

CATHFRINE [*urbanely*] That is the favorite torture of Catherine the Second, Mademoiselle I think the Captain enjoys it very much

CLAIRE Then he can have as much more of it as he wants I am sorry I intruded [*She rises to go*]

EDSTASTON [*catching her train in his teeth and holding on like a bull-dog*] Dont go Dont leave me in this horrible state Loosen me [*This is what he is saying, but as he says it with the train in his mouth it is not very intelligible*]

CLAIRE Let go You are undignified and ridiculous enough yourself without making me ridiculous [*She snatches her train away*]

EDSTASTON. Owl! Youve nearly pulled my teeth out youre worse than the Star of the North [*To Catherine*] Darling Little Mother you have a kind heart, the kindest in Europe. Have pity Have mercy I love you [*Claire bursts into tears*] Release me

CATHERINE Well, just to shew you how much kinder a Russian savage can be than an English one (though I am sorry to say I am a German), here goes! [*She stoops to loosen the straps*]

CLAIRE [*jealously*] You neednt trouble, thank you [*She pounces on the straps, and the two set Edstaston free between them*] Now get up, please, and conduct yourself with some dignity if you are not utterly demoralized

EDSTASTON Dignity! Owl! I cant I'm stiff all over I shall never be able to stand up again Oh Lord! how it hurts! [*They seize him by the shoulders and drag him up*] Yah! Agh! Wow! Oh! Mmmmm! Oh, Little Angel Mother, dont ever do this to a man again Knout him, kill him, roast him, baste him, head, hang, and quarter him, but dont tie him up like that and tickle him

CATHERINE Your young lady still seems to think that you enjoyed it

CLAIRE I know what I think I will never speak to him again Your Majesty can keep him, as far as I am concerned

CATHERINE I would not deprive you of him for worlds, though really I think he's rather a darling [*She pats his cheek*]

CLAIRE [*snorting*] So I see, indeed

EDSTASTON Dont be angry, dearest in this country everybody's a darling I'll prove it to you [*To Catherine*] Will your Majesty be

good enough to call Prince Patiomkin?

CATHERINE [*surprised into haughtiness*] Why?

EDSTASTON To oblige me

Catherine laughs good-humoredly and goes to the curtains and opens them. The band strikes up a Redowa

CATHERINE [*calling imperiously*] Patiomkin! [*The music stops suddenly*] Here! To me! Go on with your music there, you fools [*The Redowa is resumed*]

The sergeant rushes from the ballroom to relieve the Empress of the curtain. Patiomkin comes in dancing with Varinka

CATHERINE [*to Patiomkin*] The English captain wants you, little darling

Catherine resumes her seat as Patiomkin intimates by a grotesque bow that he is at Edstaston's service. Varinka passes behind Edstaston and Claire, and posts herself on Claire's right

EDSTASTON Precisely [*To Claire*] You observe, my love "little darling" Well, if her Majesty calls him a darling, is it my fault that she calls me one too?

CLAIRE I don't care. I don't think you ought to have done it. I am very angry and offended.

EDSTASTON They tied me up, dear. I couldn't help it. I fought for all I was worth.

THE SERGEANT [*at the curtains*] He fought with the strength of lions and bears. God knows I shall carry a broken sweetbread to my grave.

EDSTASTON You can't mean to throw me over, Claire [*Urgently*] Claire, Claire.

VARINKA [*in a transport of sympathetic emotion, pleading with clasped hands to Claire*] Oh, sweet little angel lamb, he loves you. It shines in his darling eyes. Pardon him, pardon him.

PATIOMKIN [*rushing from the Empress's side to Claire and falling on his knees to her*] Pardon him, pardon him, little cherub! little wild duck! little star! little glory! little jewel in the crown of heaven!

CLAIRE This is perfectly ridiculous.

VARINKA [*kneeling to her*] Pardon him, pardon him, little delight, little sleeper in a rosy cradle.

CLAIRE I'll do anything if you'll only let me alone.

THE SERGEANT [*kneeling to her*] Pardon him, pardon him, lest the mighty man bring his whip to you. God knows we all need pardon!

CLAIRE [*at the top of her voice*] I pardon him! I pardon him!

PATIOMKIN [*springing up joyfully and going*

behind Claire, whom he raises in his arms] Embrace her, victor of Bunker's Hill. Kiss her till she swoons.

THE SERGEANT Receive her in the name of the holy Nicholas.

VARINKA She begs you for a thousand dear little kisses all over her body.

CLAIRE [*vehemently*] I do not [*Patiomkin throws her into Edstaston's arms*] Oh! [*The pair, awkward and shamefaced, recoil from one another, and remain utterly inexpressive*]

CATHERINE [*pushing Edstaston towards Claire*] There is no help for it, Captain. This is Russia, not England.

EDSTASTON [*plucking up some geniality, and kissing Claire ceremoniously on the brow*] I have no objection.

VARINKA [*disgusted*] Only one kiss! and on the forehead! Fish. See how I kiss, though it is only my horribly ugly old uncle [*she throws her arms round Patiomkin's neck and covers his face with kisses*]

THE SERGEANT [*moved to tears*] Sainted Nicholas, bless your lambs!

CATHERINE Do you wonder now that I love Russia as I love no other place on earth?

NARYSHKIN [*appearing at the door*] Majesty the model for the new museum has arrived.

CATHERINE [*rising eagerly and making for the curtains*] Let us go. I can think of nothing but my museum [*In the archway she stops and turns to Edstaston, who has hurried to lift the curtain for her*] Captain, I wish you every happiness that your little angel can bring you [*For his ear alone*] I could have brought you more, but you did not think so. Farewell.

EDSTASTON [*kissing her hand, which, instead of releasing, he holds caressingly and rather patronizingly in his own*] I feel your Majesty's kindness so much that I really cannot leave you without a word of plain wholesome English advice.

CATHERINE [*snatching her hand away and bounding forward as if he had touched her with a spur*] Advice!"

PATIOMKIN Madman, take care!

NARYSHKIN Advise the Empress!"

THE SERGEANT Sainted Nicholas!

VARINKA Hoo hoo! [*a stifled splutter of laughter*]

EDSTASTON [*following the Empress and re-*

[*exclaiming simultaneously*]

XXVI

O'FLAHERTY V.C.

A RECRUITING PAMPHLET

At the door of an Irish country house in a park. Fine summer neather the summer of 1915 The porch, painted white, projects into the drive; but the door is at the side and the front has a window The porch faces east, and the door is in the north side of it On the south side is a tree in which a thrush is singing Under the window is a garden seat with an iron chair at each end of it

The last four bars of God Save the King are heard in the distance, followed by three cheers Then the band strikes up It's a Long Way to Tipperary and recedes until it is out of hearing

Private O'Flaherty V.C comes wearily southward along the drive, and falls exhausted into the garden seat. The thrush utters a note of alarm and flies away The tramp of a horse is heard

A GENTLEMAN'S VOICE Tim! Hi! Tim! [*He is heard dismounting*]

A LABORER'S VOICE Yes, your honor

THE GENTLEMAN'S VOICE Take this horse to the stables, will you?

A LABORER'S VOICE Right, your honor Yup there Gwan now. Gwan. [*The horse is led away*]

General Sir Pearce Madigan, an elderly baronet in khaki, beaming with enthusiasm, arrives O'Flaherty rises and stands at attention

SIR PEARCE No, no, O'Flaherty. none of that now. You're off duty Remember that though I am a general of forty years service, that little Cross of yours gives you a higher rank in the roll of glory than I can pretend to

O'FLAHERTY [*relaxing*] I'm thankful to you, Sir Pearce; but I wouldn't have anyone think that the baronet of my native place would let a common soldier like me sit down in his presence without leave

SIR PEARCE Well, you're not a common soldier, O'Flaherty: you're a very uncommon one; and I'm proud to have you for my guest here today

O'FLAHERTY. Sure I know, sir You have to put up with a lot from the like of me for the sake of the recruiting All the quality shakes hands with me and says they're proud to know me, just the way the king said when he pinned the Cross on me. And it's as true as I'm standing here, sir, the queen said to me

"I hear you were born on the estate of General Madigan," she says; "and the General himself tells me you were always a fine young fellow" "Bedad, Mam," I says to her, "if the General knew all the rabbits I snared on him, and all the salmon I snatched on him, and all the cows I milked on him, he'd think me the finest ornament for the county jail he ever sent there for poaching"

SIR PEARCE [*laughing*] You're welcome to them all, my lad Come [*he makes him sit down again on the garden seat*] sit down and enjoy your holiday [*he sits down on one of the iron chairs: the one at the doorless side of the porch*]

O'FLAHERTY Holiday, is it? I'd give five shillings to be back in the trenches for the sake of a little rest and quiet I never knew what hard work was til I took to recruiting. What with the standing on my legs all day, and the shaking hands, and the making speeches, and—whats worse—the listening to them, and the calling for cheers for king and country, and the saluting the flag til I'm stiff with it, and the listening to them playing God Save the King and Tipperary, and the trying to make my eyes look moist like a man in a picture book, I'm that bet that I hardly get a wink of sleep I give you my word, Sir Pearce, that I never heard the tune of Tipperary in my life til I came back from Flanders; and already it's drove me to that pitch of tiredness of it that when a poor little innocent slip of a boy in the street the other night drew himself up and saluted and began whistling it at me, I clouted his head for him, God forgive me.

SIR PEARCE [*soothingly*] Yes, yes I know. I know One does get fed up with it I've been dog tired myself on parade many a time. But still, you know, there's a gratifying side to it, too. After all, he is our king, and it's our own country, isn't it?

O'FLAHERTY. Well, sir, to you that have an estate in it, it would feel like your country. But the devil a perch of it ever I owned And as to the king, God help him, my mother would have taken the skin off my back if I'd ever let on to have any other king than

Parnell

SIR PEARCE [*rising, painfully shocked*] Your mother! What are you dreaming about, O'Flaherty? A most loyal woman Always most loyal Whenever there is an illness in the Royal Family, she asks me every time we meet about the health of the patient as anxiously as if it were yourself, her only son

O'FLAHERTY Well, she's my mother, and I wont utter a word agen her But I'm not saying a word of lie when I tell you that that old woman is the biggest kanatt from here to the cross of Monasterboice Sure she's the wildest Feman and rebel, and always has been, that ever taught a poor innocent lad like myself to pray night and morning to St Patrick to clear the English out of Ireland the same as he cleared the snakes Youll be surprised at my telling you that now, may be, Sir Pearce?

SIR PEARCE [*unable to keep still, walking away from O'Flaherty*] Surprised! I'm more than surprised, O'Flaherty I'm overwhelmed [*Turning and facing him*] Are you—are you joking?

O'FLAHERTY. If youd been brought up by my mother, sir, youd know better than to joke about her What I'm telling you is the truth, and I wouldnt tell it to you if I could see my way to get out of the fix I'll be in when my mother comes here this day to see her boy in his glory, and she after thinking all the time it was against the English I was fighting

SIR PEARCE Do you mean to say you told her such a monstrous falsehood as that you were fighting in the German army?

O'FLAHERTY I never told her one word that wasnt the truth and nothing but the truth. I told her I was going to fight for the French and for the Russians, and sure who ever heard of the French or the Russians doing anything to the English but fighting them? That was how it was, sir And sure the poor woman kissed me and went about the house singing in her old cracky voice that the French was on the sea, and theyd be here without delay, and the Orange will decay, says the Shan Van Vocht

SIR PEARCE [*sitting down again, exhausted by his feelings*] Well, I never could have believed this Never What do you suppose will happen when she finds out?

O'FLAHERTY. She mustnt find out It's not that she'd half kill me, as big as I am and

as brave as I am It's that I'm fond of her, and cant bring myself to brek the heart in her You may think it queer that a man should be fond of his mother, sir, and she having bet him from the time he could feel to the time she was too slow to ketch him, but I'm fond of her, and I'm not ashamed of it Besides, didnt she win the Cross for me?

SIR PEARCE Your mother! How?

O'FLAHERTY By bringing me up to be more afraid of running away than of fighting I was timid by nature, and when the other boys hurted me, I'd want to run away and cry But she whaled me for disgracing the blood of the O'Flahertys until I'd have fought the divil himself sooner than face her after sunking a fight That was how I got to know that fighting was easier than it looked, and that the others was as much asfear'd of me as I was of them, and that if I only held out long enough theyd lose heart and give up Thats the way I came to be so courageous I tell you, Sir Pearce, if the German army had been brought up by my mother, the Kaiser would be dining in the banqueting hall at Buckingham Palace this day, and King George polishing his jack boots for him in the scullery

SIR PEARCE But I dont like this, O'Flaherty You cant go on deceiving your mother, you know It's not right

O'FLAHERTY Cant go on deceiving her, cant I? It's little you know what a son's love can do, sir Did you ever notice what a ready liar I am?

SIR PEARCE Well, in recruiting a man gets carried away. I stretch it a bit occasionally myself After all, it's for king and country But if you wont münd my saying it, O'Flaherty, I think that story about your fighting the Kaiser and the twelve giants of the Prussian guard singlehanded would be the better for a litle toning down I dont ask you to drop it, you know, for it's popular, undoubtedly, but still, the truth is the truth Dont you think it would fetch in almost as many recruits if you reduced the number of guardsmen to six?

O'FLAHERTY Youre not used to telling lies like I am, sir I got great practice at home with my mother. What with saving my skin when I was young and thoughtless, and sparing her feelings when I was old enough to understand them, Ive hardly told my mother the truth twice a year since I was born, and

would you have me turn round on her and tell it now, when she's looking to have some peace and quiet in her old age?

SIR PEARCE [*troubled in his conscience*] Well, it's not my affair, of course, O'Flaherty. But hadn't you better talk to Father Quinlan about it?

O'FLAHERTY. Talk to Father Quinlan, is it! Do you know what Father Quinlan says to me this very morning?

SIR PEARCE Oh, you've seen him already, have you? What did he say?

O'FLAHERTY He says "You know, don't you" he says "that it's your duty, as a Christian and a good son of the Holy Church, to love your enemies?" he says "I know it's my duty as a soldier to kill them" I says "That's right, Dinny," he says "quite right. But" says he "you can kill them and do them a good turn afterwards to shew your love for them" he says, "and it's your duty to have a mass said for the souls of the hundreds of Germans you say you killed" says he; "for many and many of them were Bavarians and good Catholics" he says "Is it me that must pay for masses for the souls of the Boshes?" I says "Let the King of England pay for them" I says, "for it was his quarrel and not mine"

SIR PEARCE [*warmly*] It is the quarrel of every honest man and true patriot, O'Flaherty. Your mother must see that as clearly as I do. After all, she is a reasonable, well-disposed woman, quite capable of understanding the right and the wrong of the war. Why can't you explain to her what the war is about?

O'FLAHERTY Arra, sir, how the devil do I know what the war is about?

SIR PEARCE [*rising again and standing over him*] What! O'Flaherty do you know what you are saying? You sit there wearing the Victoria Cross for having killed God knows how many Germans, and you tell me you don't know why you did it!

O'FLAHERTY. Asking your pardon, Sir Pearce, I tell you no such thing. I know quite well why I killed them. I killed them because I was afraid that, if I didn't, they'd kill me.

SIR PEARCE [*giving it up, and sitting down again*] Yes, yes, of course, but have you no knowledge of the causes of the war? of the interests at stake? of the importance—I may almost say—in fact I will say—the sacred rights for which we are fighting? Don't you

read the papers?

O'FLAHERTY I do when I can get them. There's not many newsboys crying the evening paper in the trenches. They do say, Sir Pearce, that we shall never beat the Boshes until we make Horatio Bottomley Lord Lieutenant of England. Do you think that's true, sir?

SIR PEARCE Rubbish, man! there's no Lord Lieutenant in England. The king is Lord Lieutenant. It's a simple question of patriotism. Does patriotism mean nothing to you?

O'FLAHERTY It means different to me than what it would to you, sir. It means England and England's king to you. To me and the like of me, it means talking about the English just the way the English papers talk about the Boshes. And what good has it ever done here in Ireland? It's kept me ignorant because it filled up my mother's mind, and she thought it ought to fill up mine too. It's kept Ireland poor, because instead of trying to better ourselves we thought we was the fine fellows of patriots when we were speaking evil of Englishmen that was as poor as ourselves and maybe as good as ourselves. The Boshes I killed was more knowledgable men than me and what better am I now that I've killed them? What better is anybody?

SIR PEARCE [*huffed, turning a cold shoulder to him*] I am sorry the terrible experience of this war—the greatest war ever fought—has taught you no better, O'Flaherty.

O'FLAHERTY [*preserving his dignity*] I don't know about it's being a great war, sir. It's a big war; but that's not the same thing. Father Quinlan's new church is a big church. You might take the little old chapel out of the middle of it and not miss it. But my mother says there was more true religion in the old chapel. And the war has taught me that maybe she was right.

SIR PEARCE [*grunts sulkily*]!

O'FLAHERTY [*respectfully but doggedly*] And there's another thing it's taught me too, sir, that concerns you and me, if I may make bold to tell it to you.

SIR PEARCE [*still sulkily*] I hope it's nothing you oughtn't to say to me, O'Flaherty.

O'FLAHERTY It's this, sir, that I'm able to sit here now and talk to you without humbugging you; and that's what not one of your tenants or your tenants' children ever did to you before in all your long life. It's a true respect I'm shewing you at last, sir. Maybe

youd rather have me humbug you and tell you lies as I used, just as the boys here, God help them, would rather have me tell them how I fought the Kaiser, that all the world knows I never saw in my life, than tell them the truth. But I cant take advantage of you the way I used, not even if I seem to be wanting in respect to you and cocked up by winning the Cross

SIR PEARCE [*touched*] Not at all, O'Flaherty. Not at all

O'FLAHERTY Sure whats the Cross to me, barring the little pension it carries? Do you think I dont know that theres hundreds of men as brave as me that never had the luck to get anything for their bravery but a curse from the sergeant, and the blame for the faults of them that ought to have been their betters? Ive learnt more than youd think, sir, for how would a gentleman like you know what a poor ignorant conceited creature I was when I went from here into the wide world as a soldier? What use is all the lying, and pretending, and humbugging, and letting on, when the day comes to you that your comrade is killed in the trench beside you, and you dont as much as look round at him until you trip over his poor body, and then all you say is to ask why the hell the stretcher-bearers dont take it out of the way. Why should I read the papers to be humbugged and lied to by them that had the cunning to stay at home and send me to fight for them? Dont talk to me or to any soldier of the war being right. No war is right, and all the holy water that Father Quinlan ever blessed couldnt make one right. There, sir! Now you know what O'Flaherty V C thinks, and youre wiser so than the others that only knows what he done

SIR PEARCE [*making the best of it, and turning good-humoredly to him again*] Well, what you did was brave and manly, anyhow

O'FLAHERTY God knows whether it was or not, better than you nor me, General. I hope He wont be too hard on me for it, anyhow

SIR PEARCE [*sympathetically*] Oh yes we all have to think seriously sometimes, especially when we're a little run down. I'm afraid weve been overworking you a bit over these recruiting meetings. However, we can knock off for the rest of the day, and tomorrow's Sunday. Ive had about as much as I can stand myself [*He looks at his watch*] It's tea-

time. I wonder whats keeping your mother. O'FLAHERTY. It's nicely cocked up the old woman will be, having tea at the same table as you, sir, instead of in the kitchen. She'll be after dressing in the height of grandeur; and stop she will at every house on the way to shew herself off and tell them where she's going, and fill the whole parish with spite and envy. But sure, she shouldnt keep you waiting, sir

SIR PEARCE Oh, thats all right: she must be indulged on an occasion like this. I'm sorry my wife is in London: she'd have been glad to welcome your mother

O'FLAHERTY Sure, I know she would, sir. She was always a kind friend to the poor. Little her ladyship knew, God help her, the depth of divilment that was in us: we were like a play to her. You see, sir, she was English: that was how it was. We was to her what the Pathans and Senegalese was to me when I first seen them. I couldnt think, somehow, that they were liars, and thieves, and backbiters, and drunkards, just like ourselves or any other Christians. Oh, her ladyship never knew all that was going on behind her back: how would she? When I was a weeshy child, she gave me the first penny I ever had in my hand, and I wanted to pray for her conversion that night the same as my mother made me pray for yours, and—

SIR PEARCE [*scandalized*] Do you mean to say that your mother made you pray for my conversion?

O'FLAHERTY Sure and she wouldnt want to see a gentleman like you going to hell after she nursing your own son and bringing up my sister Annie on the bottle. That was how it was, sir. She'd rob you, and she'd lie to you, and she'd call down all the blessings of God on your head when she was selling you your own three geese that you thought had been ate by the fox the day after youd finished fattening them, sir, and all the time you were like a bit of her own flesh and blood to her. Often has she said she'd live to see you a good Catholic yet, leading victorious armies against the English and wearing the collar of gold that Malachi won from the proud invader. Oh, she's the romantic woman is my mother, and no mistake

SIR PEARCE [*in great perturbation*] I really cant believe this, O'Flaherty. I could have sworn your mother was as honest a woman as ever breathed

O'FLAHERTY And so she is, sir She's as honest as the day

SIR PEARCE Do you call it honest to steal my geese?

O'FLAHERTY. She didnt steal them, sir. It was me that stole them

SIR PEARCE Oh! And why the devil did you steal them?

O'FLAHERTY. Sure we needed them, sir Often and often we had to sell our own geese to pay you the rent to satisfy your needs, and why shouldnt we sell your geese to satisfy ours?

SIR PEARCE. Well, damn me!

O'FLAHERTY [*sweetly*] Sure you had to get what you could out of us, and we had to get what we could out of you God forgive us both!

SIR PEARCE. Really, O'Flaherty, the war seems to have upset you a little

O'FLAHERTY. It's set me thunking, sir; and I'm not used to it It's like the patriotism of the English. They never thought of being patriotic until the war broke out, and now the patriotism has took them so sudden and come so strange to them that they run about like frightened chickens, uttering all manner of nonsense But please God theyll forget all about it when the war's over. Theyre getting tired of it already.

SIR PEARCE No, no it has uplifted us all in a wonderful way The world will never be the same again, O'Flaherty Not after a war like this

O'FLAHERTY So they all say, sir I see no great differ myself It's all the fright and the excitement, and when that quiets down theyll go back to their natural divilment and be the same as ever. It's like the vermin itll wash off after a while

SIR PEARCE [*rising and planting himself firmly behind the garden seat*] Well, the long and the short of it is, O'Flaherty, I must decline to be a party to any attempt to deceive your mother I thoroughly disapprove of this feeling against the English, especially at a moment like the present Even if your mother's political sympathies are really what you represent them to be, I should think that her gratitude to Gladstone ought to cure her of such disloyal prejudices

O'FLAHERTY (*over his shoulder*) She says Gladstone was an Irishman, sir. What call would he have to meddle with Ireland as he did if he wasnt?

SIR PEARCE What nonsense! Does she suppose Mr Asquith is an Irishman?

O'FLAHERTY. She wont give him any credit for Home Rule, sir. She says Redmond made him do it She says you told her so

SIR PEARCE [*convicted out of his own mouth*] Well, I never meant her to take it up in that ridiculous way [*He moves to the end of the garden seat on O'Flaherty's left*] I'll give her a good talking to when she comes I'm not going to stand any of her nonsense

O'FLAHERTY. It's not a bit of use, sir She says all the English generals is Irish She says all the English poets and great men was Irish She says the English never knew how to read their own books until we taught them She says we're the lost tribes of the house of Israel and the chosen people of God. She says that the goddess Venus, that was born out of the foam of the sea, came up out of the water in Killiney Bay off Bray Head She says that Moses built the seven churches, and that Lazarus was buried in Glasnevin

SIR PEARCE Bosh! How does she know he was? Did you ever ask her?

O'FLAHERTY I did, sir, often

SIR PEARCE And what did she say?

O'FLAHERTY. She asked me how did I know he wasnt, and fetched me a clout on the side of my head

SIR PEARCE. But have you never mentioned any famous Englishman to her, and asked her what she had to say about him?

O'FLAHERTY. The only one I could think of was Shakespear, sir, and she says he was born in Cork.

SIR PEARCE [*exhausted*] Well, I give it up [*he throws himself into the nearest chair*] The woman is—Oh, well! No matter.

O'FLAHERTY [*sympathetically*] Yes, sir. she's pigheaded and obstinate. theres no doubt about it. She's like the English they think theres no one like themselves It's the same with the Germans, though theyre educated and ought to know better Youll never have a quiet world til you knock the patriotism out of the human race

SIR PEARCE. Still, we—

O'FLAHERTY. Whisht, sir, for God's sake. here she is

The General jumps up Mrs O'Flaherty arrives, and comes between the two men. She is very clean, and carefully dressed in the old fashioned peasant costume. black silk sunbonnet

with a tiara of trimmings, and black cloak.

O'FLAHERTY [*rising shyly*] Good evening, mother

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*severely*] You hold your whisht, and learn behavior while I pay my juty to his honor [*To Sir Pearce, heartily*] And how is your honor's good self? And how is her ladyship and all the young ladies? Oh, it's right glad we are to see your honor back again and looking the picture of health

SIR PEARCE [*forcing a note of extreme generosity*] Thank you, Mrs O'Flaherty Well, you see we've brought you back your son safe and sound I hope youre proud of him

MRS O'FLAHERTY And indeed and I am, your honor It's the brave boy he is, and why wouldnt he be, brought up on your honor's estate and with you before his eyes for a pattern of the finest soldier in Ireland Come and kiss your old mother, Dinny darlint [*O'Flaherty does so sheepishly*] Thats my own darling boy And look at your fine new uniform stained already with the eggs you've been eating and the porter you've been drinking [*She takes out her handkerchief, spits on it, and scrubs his lapel with it*] Oh, it's the untidy slovenly one you always were There! It wont be seen on the khaki it's not like the old red coat that would shew up everything that dribbled down on it. [*To Sir Pearce*] And they tell me down at the lodge that her ladyship is staying in London, and that Miss Agnes is to be married to a fine young nobleman Oh, it's your honor that is the lucky and happy father! It will be bad news for many of the young gentlemen of the quality round here, sir Theres lots thought she was going to marry young Master Lawless—

SIR PEARCE What! That—that—that bosthoo!

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*hilariously*] Let your honor alone for finding the right word! A big bosthoo he is indeed, your honor Oh, to think of the times and times I have said that Miss Agnes would be my lady as her mother was before her! Didnt I, Dinny?

SIR PEARCE And now, Mrs O'Flaherty, I daresay you have a great deal to say to Dennis that doesnt concern me I'll just go in and order tea

MRS O'FLAHERTY Oh, why would your honor disturb yourself? Sure I can take the boy into the yard.

SIR PEARCE. Not at all It wont disturb me in the least And he's too big a boy to be

taken into the yard now He has made a front seat for himself Eh? [*He goes into the house*].

MRS O'FLAHERTY Sure he has that, your honor God bless your honor! [*The General being now out of hearing, she turns threateningly to her son with one of those sudden Irish changes of manner which amaze and scandalize less flexible nations, and exclaims*] And what do you mean, you lying young scald, by telling me you were going to fight agen the English? Did you take me for a fool that couldnt find out, and the papers all full of you shaking hands with the English king at Buckingham Palace?

O'FLAHERTY I didnt shake hands with him he shook hands with me Could I turn on the man in his own house, before his own wife, with his money in my pocket and in yours, and throw his civility brack in his face?

MRS O'FLAHERTY You would take the hand of a tyrant red with the blood of Ireland—

O'FLAHERTY Arra hold your nonsense, mother he's not half the tyrant you are, God help him His hand was cleaner than mine that had the blood of his own relations on it, may be

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*threateningly*] Is that a way to speak to your mother, you young spalpeen?

O'FLAHERTY [*stoutly*] It is so, if you wont talk sense to me It's a nice thing for a poor boy to be made much of by kings and queens, and shook hands with by the heighth of his country's nobility in the capital cities of the world, and then to come home and be scolded and insulted by his own mother I'll fight for who I like, and I'll shake hands with what kings I like, and if your own son is not good enough for you, you can go and look for another Do you mind me now?

MRS O'FLAHERTY And was it the Belgians learned you such brazen impudence?

O'FLAHERTY The Belgians is good men, and the French ought to be more civil to them, let alone their being half murdered by the Boshes

MRS O'FLAHERTY Good men is it! Good men! to come over here when they were wounded because it was a Catholic country, and then to go to the Protestant Church because it didnt cost them anything, and some of them to never go near a church at all. Thats what you call good men!

O'FLAHERTY Oh, youre the mighty fine

politician, arnt you? Much you know about Belgians or foreign parts or the world youre living in, God help you!

MRS O'FLAHERTY. Why wouldnt I know better than you? Amment I your mother?

O'FLAHERTY. And if you are itself, how can you know what you never seen as well as me that was dug into the continent of Europe for six months, and was buried in the earth of it three times with the shells bursting on the top of me? I tell you I know what I'm about I have my own reasons for taking part in this great conflict I'd be ashamed to stay at home and not fight when everybody else is fighting

MRS O'FLAHERTY. If you wanted to fight, why couldnt you fight in the German army?

O'FLAHERTY. Because they only get a penny a day

MRS O'FLAHERTY. Well, and if they do itself, isnt there the French army?

O'FLAHERTY. They only get a hapenny a day

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*much dashed*] Oh murder! They must be a mean lot, Dinny

O'FLAHERTY [*sarcastic*] Maybe youd have me join the Turkish army, and worship the heathen Mahomet that put a corn in his ear and pretended it was a message from the heavens when the pigeon come to pick it out and eat it. I went where I could get the biggest allowance for you, and little thanks I get for it!

MRS O'FLAHERTY. Allowance, is it! Do you know what the thieving blackguards did on me? They came to me and they says, "Was your son a big eater?" they says "Oh, he was that" says I. "ten shillings a week wouldnt keep him" Sure I thought the more I said the more theyd give me "Then" says they, "thats ten shillings a week off your allowance" they says, "because you save that by the king feeding him" "Indeed!" says I. "I suppose if I'd six sons, youd stop three pound a week from me, and make out that I ought to pay you money instead of you paying me" "Theres a fallacy in your argument" they says

O'FLAHERTY. A what?

MRS O'FLAHERTY. A fallacy thats the word he said. I says to him, "It's a Pharisee I'm thinking you mean, sir; but you can keep your dirty money that your king grudges a poor old widow, and please God the English will be bet yet for the deadly sin of oppressing

the poor"; and with that I shut the door in his face.

O'FLAHERTY [*furious*] Do you tell me they knocked ten shillings off you for my keep?

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*soothing him*] No, darlint they only knocked off half a crown. I put up with it because Ive got the old age pension, and they know very well I'm only sixty-two; so Ive the better of them by half a crown a week anyhow

O'FLAHERTY. It's a queer way of doing business If theyd tell you straight out what they was going to give you, you wouldnt mind; but if there was twenty ways of telling the truth and only one way of telling a lie, the Government would find it out. It's in the nature of governments to tell lies

Teresa Driscoll, a parlor maid, comes from the house

TERESA. Youre to come up to the drawing room to have your tea, Mrs O'Flaherty.

MRS O'FLAHERTY. Mind you have a sup of good black tea for me in the kitchen afterwards, acushla That washy drawing room tea will give me the wind if I leave it on my stomach [*She goes into the house, leaving the two young people alone together*]

O'FLAHERTY. Is that yourself, Tessie? And how are you?

TERESA. Nicely, thank you And hows yourself?

O'FLAHERTY. Finely, thank God [*He produces a gold chain*] Look what Ive brought you, Tessie

TERESA [*shrinking*] Sure I dont like to touch it, Denny Did you take it off a dead man?

O'FLAHERTY. No. I took it off a live one; and thankful he was to me to be alive and kept a prisoner in ease and comfort, and me left fighting in peril of my life

TERESA [*taking it*] Do you think it's real gold, Denny?

O'FLAHERTY. It's real German gold, anyhow

TERESA. But German silver isnt real, Denny.

O'FLAHERTY [*his face darkening*] Well, it's the best the Bosh could do for me, anyhow

TERESA. Do you think I might take it to the jeweller next market day and ask him?

O'FLAHERTY [*sulkily*] You may take it to the divil if you like

TERESA. You neednt lose your temper about it I only thought I'd like to know The nice fool I'd look if I went about shewing off a chain that turned out to be only brass!

O'FLAHERTY. I think you might say Thank

you

TERESA Do you? I think you might have said something more to me than "Is that yourself?" You couldnt say less to the postman

O'FLAHERTY [*his brow clearing*] Oh, is that whats the matter? Here! come and take the taste of the brass out of my mouth [*He seizes her and kisses her*]

Teresa, without losing her Irish dignity, takes the kiss as appreciatively as a connoisseur might take a glass of wine, and sits down with him on the garden seat

TERESA [*as he squeezes her waist*] Thank God the priest cant see us here!

O'FLAHERTY It's little they care for priests in France, alanna

TERESA And what had the queen on her, Denny, when she spoke to you in the palace?

O'FLAHERTY She had a bonnet on without any strings to it And she had a plakeen of embroidery down her bosom And she had her waist where it used to be, and not where the other ladies had it And she had little brooches in her ears, though she hadnt half the jewelry of Mrs Sullivan that keeps the popshop in Drumpogue And she dresses her hair down over her forehead, in a fringe like And she has an Irish look about her eyebrows And she didnt know what to say to me, poor woman! and I didnt know what to say to her, God help me!

TERESA Youll have a pension now with the Cross, wont you, Denny?

O'FLAHERTY Sixpence three farthings a day

TERESA That isnt much

O'FLAHERTY I take out the rest in glory

TERESA And if youre wounded, youll have a wound pension, wont you?

O'FLAHERTY I will, please God

TERESA Youre going out again, arnt you, Denny?

O'FLAHERTY I cant help myself I'd be shot for a deserter if I didnt go, and may be I'll be shot by the Boshes if I do go, so between the two of them I'm nicely fixed up

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*calling from within the house*] Tessie! Tessie darlint!

TERESA [*disengaging herself from his arm and rising*] I'm wanted for the tea table Youll have a pension anyhow, Denny, wont you, whether youre wounded or not?

MRS O'FLAHERTY Come, child, come

TERESA [*impatiently*] Oh, sure I'm coming

[*She tries to smile at Denny, not very convincingly, and hurries into the house*]

O'FLAHERTY [*alone*] And if I do get a pension itself, the devil a penny of it youll ever have the spending of

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*as she comes from the porch*] Oh, it's a shame for you to keep the girl from her juties, Dinny You might get her into trouble

O'FLAHERTY Much I care whether she gets into trouble or not! I pity the man that gets her into trouble He'll get himself into worse

MRS O'FLAHERTY Whats that you tell me? Have you been falling out with her, and she a girl with a fortune of ten pounds?

O'FLAHERTY Let her keep her fortune I wouldnt touch her with the tongs if she had thousands and millions

MRS O'FLAHERTY Oh fie for shame, Dinny! why would you say the like of that of a decent honest girl, and one of the Driscolls too?

O'FLAHERTY Why wouldnt I say it? She's thinking of nothing but to get me out there again to be wounded so that she may spend my pension, bad seran to her!

MRS O'FLAHERTY Why, whats come over you, child, at all at all?

O'FLAHERTY Knowledge and wisdom has come over me with pain and fear and trouble Ive been made a fool of and imposed upon all my life I thought that covetous sthreal in there was a walking angel, and now if ever I marry at all I'll marry a Frenchwoman

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*fervently*] Youll not, so, and dont you dar repeat such a thing to me

O'FLAHERTY Wont I, futh! Ive been as good as married to a couple of them already

MRS O'FLAHERTY The Lord be praised, what wickedness have you been up to, you young blackguard?

O'FLAHERTY One of them Frenchwomen would cook you a meal twice in the day and all days and every day that Sir Pearce himself might go begging through Ireland for, and never see the like of I'll have a French wife, I tell you, and when I settle down to be a farmer I'll have a French farm, with a field as big as the continent of Europe that ten of your dirty little fields here wouldnt so much as fill the ditch of

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*furious*] Then it's a French mother you may go look for, for I'm done with you

O'FLAHERTY And it's no great loss youd be if it wasnt for my natural feelings for you, for

it's only a silly ignorant old countrywoman you are with all your fine talk about Ireland you that never stepped beyond the few acres of it you were born on!

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*tottering to the garden seat and shewing signs of breaking down*] Dinny darlint, why are you like this to me? Whats happened to you?

O'FLAHERTY [*gloomily*] Whats happened to everybody? thats what I want to know Whats happened to you that I thought all the world of and was afeard of? Whats happened to Sir Pearce, that I thought was a great general, and that I now see to be no more fit to command an army than an old hen? Whats happened to Tessie, that I was mad to marry a year ago, and that I wouldnt take now with all Ireland for her fortune? I tell you the world's creation is crumbling in ruins about me, and then you come and ask whats happened to me?

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*giving way to wild grief*] Ochone! ochone! my son's turned agen me. Oh, whatll I do at all at all? Oh! oh! oh! oh!

SIR PEARCE [*running out of the house*] Whats this infernal noise? What on earth is the matter?

O'FLAHERTY Arra hold your whisht, mother Dont you see his honor?

MRS O'FLAHERTY Oh, sir, I'm ruined and destroyed Oh, wont you speak to Dinny, sir. I'm heart scalded with him He wants to marry a Frenchwoman on me, and to go away and be a foreigner and desert his mother and betray his country It's mad he is with the roaring of the cannons and he killing the Germans and the Germans killing him, bad cess to them! My boy is taken from me and turned agen me, and who is to take care of me in my old age after all Ive done for him, ochone! ochone!

O'FLAHERTY. Hold your noise, I tell you Who's going to leave you? I'm going to take you with me There now does that satisfy you?

MRS O'FLAHERTY. Is it take me into a strange land among heathens and pagans and savages, and me not knowing a word of their language nor them of mine?

O'FLAHERTY A good job they dont may be theyll think youre talking sense

MRS O'FLAHERTY Ask me to die out of Ireland, is it? and the angels not to find me when they come for me!

O'FLAHERTY. And would you ask me to live

in Ireland where Ive been imposed on and kept in ignorance, and to die where the divil himself wouldnt take me as a gift, let alone the blessed angels? You can come or stay. You can take your old way or take my young way. But stick in this place I will not among a lot of good-for-nothing divils thatll not do a hand's turn but watch the grass growing and build up the stone wall where the cow walked through it. And Sir Horace Plunkett breaking his heart all the time telling them how they might put the land into decent tillage like the French and Belgians

SIR PEARCE Yes. he's quite right, you know, Mrs O'Flaherty quite right there

MRS O'FLAHERTY Well, sir, please God the war will last a long time yet, and may be I'll die before it's over and the separation allowance stops

O'FLAHERTY Thats all you care about. It's nothing but mulch cows we men are for the women. with their separation allowances, ever since the war began, bad luck to them that made it!

TERESA [*coming from the porch between the General and Mrs O'Flaherty*] Hannah sent me out for to tell you, sir, that the tea will be black and the cake not fit to eat with the cold if yous all dont come at wanst.

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*breaking out again*] Oh, Tessie darlint, what have you been saying to Dinny at all at all? Oh! oh—

SIR PEARCE [*out of patience*] You cant discuss that here We shall have Tessie beginning now.

O'FLAHERTY Thats right, sir drive them in

TERESA I havnt said a word to him. He—

SIR PEARCE Hold your tongue; and go in and attend to your business at the tea table

TERESA But amment I telling your honor that I never said a word to him? He gave me a beautiful gold chain Here it is to shew your honour thats it's no lie I'm telling you

SIR PEARCE Whats this, O'Flaherty? Youve been looting some unfortunate officer.

O'FLAHERTY. No sir I stole it from him of his own accord

MRS O'FLAHERTY Wouldnt your honor tell him that his mother has the first call on it? What would a slip of a girl like that be doing with a gold chain round her neck?

TERESA [*venomously*] Anyhow, I have a neck to put it round and not a hank of wrinkles
At this unfortunate remark, Mrs O'Flaherty

bounds from her seat, and an appalling tempest of wordy wrath breaks out The remonstrances and commands of the General, and the protests and menaces of O'Flaherty, only increase the hubbub They are soon all speaking at once at the top of their voices

MRS O'FLAHERTY [*solo*] You impudent young heifer, how dar you say such a thing to me? [*Teresa retorts furiously, the men interfere, and the solo becomes a quartet, fortissimo*] Ive a good mind to clout your ears for you to teach you manners Be ashamed of yourself, do, and learn to know who youre speaking to That I maynt sin! but I dont know what the good God was thinking about when he made the like of you Let me not see you casting sheep's eyes at my son again There never was an O'Flaherty yet that would demcan himself by keeping company with a dirty Driscoll; and if I see you next or nigh my house I'll put you in the ditch with a flea in your ear mind that now

TERESA Is it me you offer such a name to, you foul-mouthed, dirty minded, lying, sloothering old sow, you? I wouldnt soil my tongue by calling you in your right name and telling Sir Pearce whats the common talk of the town about you You and your O'Flahertys! setting yourself up agen the Driscolls that would never lower themselves to be seen in conversation with you at the fair You can keep your ugly stingy lump of a son, for what he is but a common soldier? and God help the girl that gets him, say I! So the back of my hand to you, Mrs O'Flaherty, and that the cat may tear your ugly old face!

SIR PEARCE Silence Tessie did you hear me ordering you to go into the house? Mrs O'Flaherty! [*Louder*] Mrs O'Flaherty!! Will you just listen to me one moment? Please [*Furiously*] Do you hear me speaking to you, woman? Are you human beings or are you wild beasts? Stop that noise immediately do you hear? [*Yelling*] Are you going to do what I order you, or are you not? Scandalous! Disgracefull! This comes of being too familiar with you O'Flaherty shove them into the house Out with the whole damned pack of you

O'FLAHERTY [*to the women*] Here now none of that, none of that Go easy, I tell you Hold your whisht, mother, will you, or youll be sorry for it after [*To Teresa*] Is

that the way for a decent young girl to speak? [*Despairingly*] Oh, for the Lord's sake, shut up, will you? Have yous no respect for yourselves or your betterers? [*Peremptorily*] Let me have no more of it, I tell you Och! the devil's in the whole crew of you In with you into the house this very minute and tear one another's eyes out in the kitchen if you like In with you

The two men seize the two women, and push them, still violently abusing one another, into the house Sir Pearce slams the door upon them savagely Immediately a heavenly silence falls on the summer afternoon The two sit down out of breath, and for a long time nothing is said Sir Pearce sits on an iron chair O'Flaherty sits on the garden seat The thrush begins to sing melodiously O'Flaherty cocks his ears, and looks up at it A smile spreads over his troubled features Sir Pearce, with a long sigh, takes out his pipe, and begins to fill it

O'FLAHERTY [*idyllically*] What a discontented sort of an animal a man is, sir! Only a month ago, I was in the quiet of the country out at the front, with not a sound except the birds and the bellow of a cow in the distance as it might be, and the shrapnel making little clouds in the heavens, and the shells whistling, and may be a yell or two when one of us was hit, and would you believe it, sir, I complained of the noise and wanted to have a peaceful hour at home Well them two has taught me a lesson This morning, sir, when I was telling the boys here how I was longing to be back taking my part for king and country with the others, I was lying, as you well knew, sir Now I can go and say it with a clear conscience Some likes war's alarums, and some likes home life Ive tried both, sir, and I'm all for war's alarums now I always was a quiet lad by natural disposition

SIR PEARCE Strictly between ourselves, O'Flaherty, and as one soldier to another [*O'Flaherty salutes, but without stiffening*], do you think we should have got an army without conscription if domestic life had been as happy as people say it is?

O'FLAHERTY Well, between you and me and the wall, Sir Pearce, I think the less we say about that until the war's over, the better

He winks at the General The General strikes a match The thrush sings A jay laughs The conversation drops

THE END

XXVII

THE INCA OF PERUSALEM

AN ALMOST HISTORICAL COMEDIETTA

PROLOGUE

The tableau curtains are closed An English archdeacon comes through them in a condition of extreme irritation He speaks through the curtains to someone behind them

THE ARCHDEACON Once for all, Ermyntrude, I cannot afford to maintain you in your present extravagance [He goes to a flight of steps leading to the stalls and sits down disconsolately on the top step A fashionably dressed lady comes through the curtains and contemplates him with patient obstinacy He continues, grumbling] An English clergyman's daughter should be able to live quite respectably and comfortably on an allowance of £150 a year, wrung with great difficulty from the domestic budget

ERMYNTRUDE You are not a common clergyman you are an archdeacon

THE ARCHDEACON [angrily] That does not affect my emoluments to the extent of enabling me to support a daughter whose extravagance would disgrace a royal personage [Scrambling to his feet and scolding at her] What do you mean by it, Miss?

ERMYNTRUDE. Oh really, father! Miss! Is that the way to talk to a widow?

THE ARCHDEACON Is that the way to talk to a father? Your marriage was a most disastrous imprudence It gave you habits that are absolutely beyond your means—I mean beyond my means you have no means Why did you not marry Matthews the best curate I ever had?

ERMYNTRUDE I wanted to, and you wouldnt let me You insisted on my marrying Roosenhonkers-Pipstein.

THE ARCHDEACON I had to do the best for you, my child Roosenhonkers-Pipstein was a millionaire.

ERMYNTRUDE How did you know he was a millionaire?

THE ARCHDEACON He came from America Of course he was a millionaire Besides, he proved to my solicitors that he had fifteen million dollars when you married him

ERMYNTRUDE His solicitors proved to me that he had sixteen millions when he died He was a millionaire to the last.

THE ARCHDEACON O Mammon, Mammon! I am punished now for bowing the knee to him Is there nothing left of your settlement? Fifty thousand dollars a year it secured to you, as we all thought Only half the securities could be called speculative The other half were gilt-edged What has become of it all?

ERMYNTRUDE The speculative ones were not paid up, and the gilt-edged ones just paid the calls on them until the whole show burst up

THE ARCHDEACON Ermyntrude what expressions!

ERMYNTRUDE Oh bother! If you had lost ten thousand a year what expressions would you use, do you think? The long and the short of it is that I cant live in the squalid way you are accustomed to

THE ARCHDEACON. Squalid!

ERMYNTRUDE I have formed habits of comfort

THE ARCHDEACON Comfort!!

ERMYNTRUDE Well, elegance if you like Luxury, if you insist Call it what you please A house that costs less than a hundred thousand dollars a year to run is intolerable to me

THE ARCHDEACON Then, my dear, you had better become lady's maid to a princess until you can find another millionaire to marry you.

ERMYNTRUDE Thats an idea I will [She vanishes through the curtains]

THE ARCHDEACON What! Come back, Miss Come back this instant. [The lights are lowered]. Oh, very well I have nothing more to say [He descends the steps into the auditorium and makes for the door, grumbling all the time] Insane, senseless extravagance! [Barking] Worthlessness!! [Muttering] I will not bear it any longer Dresses, hats, furs, gloves, motor rides one bill after another money going like water No restraint, no self-control, no decency [Shrieking] I say, no decency! [Muttering again] Nice state of things we are coming to! A pretty world! But I simply will not bear it She can do as

she likes I wash my hands of her I am not going to die in the workhouse for any good-for-nothing, undutiful, spendthrift daughter, and the sooner that is understood by everybody the better for all par—*[He is by this time out of hearing in the corridor]*

THE PLAY

A hotel sitting room A table in the centre On it a telephone Two chairs at it, opposite one another Behind it, the door The fireplace has a mirror in the mantelpiece

A spinster Princess, hatted and gloved, is ushered in by the Hotel Manager, spruce and artificially bland by professional habit, but treating his customer with a condescending affability which sails very close to the east wind of insolence

THE MANAGER I am sorry I am unable to accommodate Your Highness on the first floor

THE PRINCESS *[very shy and nervous]* Oh please dont mention it This is quite nice Very nice Thank you very much

THE MANAGER We could prepare a room in the annexe—

THE PRINCESS Oh no This will do very well

She takes off her gloves and hat, puts them on the table, and sits down

THE MANAGER The rooms are quite as good up here There is less noise, and there is the lift. If Your Highness desires anything, there is the telephone—

THE PRINCESS Oh, thank you, I dont want anything The telephone is so difficult I am not accustomed to it

THE MANAGER Can I take any order? Some tea?

THE PRINCESS Oh, thank you Yes I should like some tea, if I might—if it would not be too much trouble

He goes out The telephone rings The Princess starts out of her chair, terrified, and recoils as far as possible from the instrument

THE PRINCESS Oh dear! *[It rings again She looks scared It rings again She approaches it timidly It rings again She retreats hastily It rings repeatedly She runs to it in desperation and puts the receiver to her ear]* Who is there? What do I do? I am not used to the telephone I dont know how—What! Oh, I can hear you speaking quite distinctly *[She sits down, delighted, and settles herself for a conversation]* How wonderful! What! A lady? Oh! a person

Oh yes! I know Yes, please, send her up Have my servants finished their lunch yet? Oh no please dont disturb them I'd rather not It doesnt matter Thank you What? Oh yes, it's quite easy I had no idea—am I to hang it up just as it was? Thank you *[She hangs it up]*

Ermyntrude enters, presenting a plain and staid appearance in a long straight waterproof with a hood over her head gear She comes to the end of the table opposite to that at which the Princess is seated

THE PRINCESS Excuse me I have been talking through the telephone, and I heard quite well, though I have never ventured before Wont you sit down?

ERMYNTRUDE No, thank you, Your Highness I am only a lady's maid I understood you wanted one

THE PRINCESS Oh no you mustnt think I want one It's so unpatriotic to want anything now, on account of the war, you know I sent my maid away as a public duty, and now she has married a soldier and is expecting a war baby But I dont know how to do without her Ive tried my very best, but somehow it doesnt answer everybody cheats me, and in the end it isnt any saving So Ive made up my mind to sell my piano and have a maid That will be a real saving, because I really dont care a bit for music, though of course one has to pretend to. Dont you think so?

ERMYNTRUDE Certainly I do, Your Highness Nothing could be more correct. Saving and self-denial both at once, and an act of kindness to me, as I am out of place

THE PRINCESS I'm so glad you see it in that way Er—you wont mind my asking, will you?—how did you lose your place?

ERMYNTRUDE The war, Your Highness, the war

THE PRINCESS Oh yes, of course But how—

ERMYNTRUDE *[taking out her handkerchief and shewing signs of grief]* My poor mistress—

THE PRINCESS Oh please say no more Dont think about it So tactless of me to mention it

ERMYNTRUDE *[mastering her emotion and smiling through her tears]* Your Highness is too good.

THE PRINCESS Do you think you could be happy with me? I attach such importance to that

ERMYNTRUDE *[gushing]* Oh, I know I shall.

THE PRINCESS You must not expect too much There is my uncle He is very severe and hasty, and he is my guardian I once had a maid I liked very much; but he sent her away the very first time.

ERMYNTRUDE The first time of what, Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS Oh, something she did I am sure she had never done it before, and I know she would never have done it again, she was so truly contrite and nice about it.

ERMYNTRUDE About what, Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS Well, she wore my jewels and one of my dresses at a rather improper ball with her young man, and my uncle saw her

ERMYNTRUDE Then he was at the ball too, Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS [*struck by the inference*] I suppose he must have been I wonder! You know, it's very sharp of you to find that out I hope you are not too sharp

ERMYNTRUDE A lady's maid has to be, Your Highness [*She produces some letters*] Your Highness wishes to see my testimonials, no doubt I have one from an Archdeacon [*She proffers the letters*]

THE PRINCESS [*taking them*] Do archdeacons have maids? How curious!

ERMYNTRUDE No, Your Highness They have daughters I have first-rate testimonials from the Archdeacon and from his daughter.

THE PRINCESS [*reading them*] The daughter says you are in every respect a treasure The Archdeacon says he would have kept you if he could possibly have afforded it Most satisfactory, I'm sure

ERMYNTRUDE May I regard myself as engaged then, Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS [*alarmed*] Oh, I'm sure I don't know If you like, of course. but do you think I ought to?

ERMYNTRUDE Naturally I think Your Highness ought to, most decidedly

THE PRINCESS Oh well, if you think that, I daresay you're quite right. You'll excuse my mentioning it, I hope, but what wages—er—?

ERMYNTRUDE The same as the maid who went to the ball Your Highness need not make any change

THE PRINCESS M'yes Of course she began with less. But she had such a number of relatives to keep! It was quite heartbreaking:

I had to raise her wages again and again

ERMYNTRUDE I shall be quite content with what she began on; and I have no relatives dependent on me And I am willing to wear my own dresses at balls

THE PRINCESS I am sure nothing could be fairer than that My uncle can't object to that can he?

ERMYNTRUDE If he does, Your Highness, ask him to speak to me about it I shall regard it as part of my duties to speak to your uncle about matters of business

THE PRINCESS Would you? You must be frightfully courageous

ERMYNTRUDE May I regard myself as engaged. Your Highness? I should like to set about my duties immediately

THE PRINCESS Oh yes, I think so Oh certainly I—

A waiter comes in with the tea He places the tray on the table

THE PRINCESS Oh, thank you

ERMYNTRUDE [*raising the cover from the tea cake and looking at it*] How long has that been standing at the top of the stairs?

THE PRINCESS [*terrified*] Oh please! It doesn't matter

THE WAITER It has not been waiting Straight from the kitchen, madam, believe me

ERMYNTRUDE Send the manager here.

THE WAITER The manager! What do you want with the manager?

ERMYNTRUDE He will tell you when I have done with him. How dare you treat Her Highness in this disgraceful manner? What sort of pothouse is this? Where did you learn to speak to persons of quality? Take away your cold tea and cold cake instantly. Give them to the chambermaid you were flirting with whilst Her Highness was waiting Order some fresh tea at once, and do not presume to bring it yourself have it brought by a civil waiter who is accustomed to wait on ladies, and not, like you, on commercial travellers.

THE WAITER Alas, madam, I am not accustomed to wait on anybody. Two years ago I was an eminent medical man. My waiting-room was crowded with the flower of the aristocracy and the higher bourgeoisie from nine to six every day But the war came; and my patients were ordered to give up their luxuries They gave up their doctors, but kept their week-end hotels, closing every

career to me except the career of a waiter [*He puts his fingers on the teapot to test its temperature, and automatically takes out his watch with the other hand as if to count the teapot's pulse*] You are right the tea is cold it was made by the wife of a once fashionable architect The cake is only half toasted what can you expect from a ruined west-end tailor whose attempt to establish a second-hand business failed last Tuesday week? Have you the heart to complain to the manager? Have we not suffered enough? Are our miseries new—[*the manager enters*] Oh Lord! here he is [*The waiter withdraws abjectly, taking the tea tray with him*]

THE MANAGER Pardon, Your Highness, but I have received an urgent inquiry for rooms from an English family of importance, and I venture to ask you to let me know how long you intend to honour us with your presence

THE PRINCESS [*rising anxiously*] Oh! am I in the way?

ERMYNTRUDE [*sternly*] Sit down, madam [*The Princess sits down forlornly Ermyntrude turns imperiously to the Manager*] Her Highness will require this room for twenty minutes

THE MANAGER Twenty minutes!

ERMYNTRUDE Yes it will take fully that time to find a proper apartment in a respectable hotel

THE MANAGER I do not understand

ERMYNTRUDE You understand perfectly How dare you offer Her Highness a room on the second floor?

THE MANAGER But I have explained. The first floor is occupied At least—

ERMYNTRUDE Well? At least?

THE MANAGER It is occupied

ERMYNTRUDE Dont you dare tell Her Highness a falsehood It is not occupied. You are saving it up for the arrival of the five fifteen express, from which you hope to pick up some fat armaments contractor who will drink all the bad champagne in your cellar at 25 francs a bottle, and pay twice over for everything because he is in the same hotel with Her Highness, and can boast of having turned her out of the best rooms

THE MANAGER But Her Highness was so gracious I did not know that Her Highness was at all particular

ERMYNTRUDE And you take advantage of Her Highness's graciousness You impose on

her with your stories You give her a room not fit for a dog You send cold tea to her by a decayed professional person disguised as a waiter But dont think you can trifle with me I am a lady's maid, and I know the ladies' maids and valets of all the aristocracies of Europe and all the millionaires of America When I expose your hotel as the second-rate little hole it is, not a soul above the rank of a curate with a large family will be seen entering it. I shake its dust off my feet Order the luggage to be taken down at once

THE MANAGER [*appealing to the Princess*] Can Your Highness believe this of me? Have I had the misfortune to offend Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS Oh no I am quite satisfied Please—

ERMYNTRUDE. Is Your Highness dissatisfied with me?

THE PRINCESS [*intimidated*] Oh no please dont think that I only meant—

ERMYNTRUDE [*to the Manager*] You hear Perhaps you think Her Highness is going to do the work of teaching you your place herself, instead of leaving it to her maid

THE MANAGER Oh please, mademoiselle Believe me our only wish is to make you perfectly comfortable But in consequence of the war, all royal personages now practise a rigid economy, and desire us to treat them like their poorest subjects

THE PRINCESS Oh yes You are quite right—

ERMYNTRUDE [*interrupting*] There! Her Highness forgives you, but dont do it again Now go downstairs, my good man, and get that suite on the first floor ready for us And send some proper tea And turn on the heating apparatus until the temperature in the rooms is comfortably warm And have hot water put in all the bedrooms—

THE MANAGER There are basins with hot and cold taps

ERMYNTRUDE [*scornfully*] Yes there would be I suppose we must put up with that sinks in our rooms, and pipes that rattle and bang and guggle all over the house whenever anyone washes his hands I know

THE MANAGER [*gallant*] You are hard to please, mademoiselle

ERMYNTRUDE No harder than other people But when I'm not pleased I'm not too ladylike to say so That's all the difference There is nothing more, thank you

The Manager shrugs his shoulders resignedly.

makes a deep bow to the Princess; goes to the door, wafts a kiss surreptitiously to Ermyntrude; and goes out

THE PRINCESS It's wonderful! How have you the courage?

ERMYNTRUDE In Your Highness's service I know no fear Your Highness can leave all unpleasant people to me

THE PRINCESS How I wish I could! The most dreadful thing of all I have to go through myself

ERMYNTRUDE Dare I ask what it is, Your Highness?

THE PRINCESS I'm going to be married I'm to be met here and married to a man I never saw. A boy! A boy who never saw me! One of the sons of the Inca of Perusalem

ERMYNTRUDE Indeed? Which son?

THE PRINCESS I dont know. They havnt settled which It's a dreadful thing to be a princess they just marry you to anyone they like The Inca is to come and look at me, and pick out whichever of his sons he thinks will suit And then I shall be an alien enemy everywhere except in Perusalem, because the Inca has made war on everybody. And I shall have to pretend that everybody has made war on him It's too bad

ERMYNTRUDE Still, a husband is a husband I wish I had one

THE PRINCESS Oh, how can you say that! I'm afraid youre not a nice woman

ERMYNTRUDE. Your Highness is provided for I'm not

THE PRINCESS Even if you could bear to let a man touch you, you shouldnt say so

ERMYNTRUDE I shall not say so again, Your Highness, except perhaps to the man

THE PRINCESS It's too dreadful to think of I wonder you can be so coarse I really dont think youll suit I feel sure now that you know more about men than you should

ERMYNTRUDE I am a widow, Your Highness

THE PRINCESS [*overwhelmed*] Oh, I BEG your pardon. Of course I ought to have known you would not have spoken like that if you were not married. That makes it all right, doesnt it? I'm so sorry

The Manager returns, white, scared, hardly able to speak

THE MANAGER. Your Highness an officer asks to see you on behalf of the Inca of Perusalem

THE PRINCESS [*rising distractedly*] Oh, I

cant, really Oh, what shall I do?

THE MANAGER On important business, he says, Your Highness Captain Duval

ERMYNTRUDE Duval! Nonsense! The usual thing It is the Inca himself, incognito.

THE PRINCESS Oh, send him away Oh, I'm so afraid of the Inca I'm not properly dressed to receive him, and he is so particular he would order me to stay in my room for a week Tell him to call tomorrow say I'm ill in bed I cant I wont: I darent you must get rid of him somehow

ERMYNTRUDE Leave him to me, Your Highness

THE PRINCESS Youd never dare!

ERMYNTRUDE I am an Englishwoman, Your Highness, and perfectly capable of tackling ten Incas if necessary. I will arrange the matter [*To the Manager*] Shew Her Highness to her bedroom; and then shew Captain Duval in here

THE PRINCESS Oh, thank you so much [*She goes to the door Ermyntrude, noticing that she has left her hat and gloves on the table, runs after her with them*] Oh, thank you And oh, please, if I must have one of his sons, I should like a fair one that doesnt shave, with soft hair and a beard I couldnt bear being kissed by a bristly person [*She runs out, the Manager bowing as she passes He follows her*]

Ermyntrude whips off her waterproof, hides it, and gets herself swiftly into perfect trim at the mirror, before the Manager, with a large jewel case in his hand, returns, ushering in the Inca

THE MANAGER Captain Duval

The Inca, in military uniform, advances with a marked and imposing stage walk, stops, orders the trembling Manager by a gesture to place the jewel case on the table, dismisses him with a frown, touches his helmet graciously to Ermyntrude, and takes off his cloak

THE INCA I beg you, madam, to be quite at your ease, and to speak to me without ceremony.

ERMYNTRUDE [*moving haughtily and carelessly to the table*] I hadnt the slightest intention of treating you with ceremony [*She sits down a liberty which gives him a perceptible shock*] I am quite at a loss to imagine why I should treat a perfect stranger named Duval a captain! almost a subaltern! with the smallest ceremony.

THE INCA. That is true I had for the moment forgotten my position

ERMYNTRUDE It doesnt matter. You may sit down.

THE INCA [*frowning*] What!

ERMYNTRUDE I said, you may . sit . down

THE INCA Oh [*His moustache droops He sits down*]

ERMYNTRUDE What is your business?

THE INCA I come on behalf of the Inca of Perusalem

ERMYNTRUDE The Allerhöchst?

THE INCA Precisely

ERMYNTRUDE I wonder does he feel ridiculous when people call him the Allerhöchst

THE INCA [*surprised*] Why should he? He is the Allerhöchst

ERMYNTRUDE. Is he nice looking?

THE INCA I—er Er—I I—er I am not a good judge

ERMYNTRUDE They say he takes himself very seriously

THE INCA Why should he not, madam? Providence has entrusted to his family the care of a mighty empire He is in a position of half divine, half paternal responsibility towards sixty millions of people, whose duty it is to die for him at the word of command To take himself otherwise than seriously would be blasphemous It is a punishable offence—severely punishable—in Perusalem It is called Incadisparagement

ERMYNTRUDE How cheerfull Can he laugh?

THE INCA Certainly, madam [*He laughs, harshly and mirthlessly*] Ha ha! Ha ha ha!

ERMYNTRUDE [*frigidly*] I asked could the Inca laugh I did not ask could you laugh

THE INCA That is true, madam [*Chuckling*] Devilish amusing, that! [*He laughs, genially and sincerely, and becomes a much more agreeable person*] Pardon me I am now laughing because I cannot help it I am amused The other was merely an imitation a failure, I admit

ERMYNTRUDE You intimated that you had some business?

THE INCA [*producing a very large jewel case, and relapsing into solemnity*] I am instructed by the Allerhöchst to take a careful note of your features and figure, and, if I consider them satisfactory, to present you with this trifling token of His Imperial Majesty's regard. I do consider them satisfactory Allow me [*he opens the jewel case and presents it*]

ERMYNTRUDE [*staring at the contents*] What awful taste he must have! I cant wear that

THE INCA [*reddening*] Take care, madam! This brooch was designed by the Inca himself Allow me to explain the design. In the centre, the shield of Arminius The ten surrounding medallions represent the ten castles of His Majesty The rim is a piece of the telephone cable laid by His Majesty across the Shipskeel canal The pin is a model in miniature of the sword of Henry the Birdcatcher

ERMYNTRUDE Miniature! It must be bigger than the original My good man, you dont expect me to wear this round my neck it's as big as a turtle [*He shuts the case with an angry snap*] How much did it cost?

THE INCA For materials and manufacture alone, half a million Perusalem dollars, madam The Inca's design constitutes it a work of art As such, it is now worth probably ten million dollars

ERMYNTRUDE Give it to me [*She snatches it*] I'll pawn it and buy something nice with the money

THE INCA Impossible, madam A design by the Inca must not be exhibited for sale in the shop window of a pawnbroker [*He flings himself into his chair, fuming*]

ERMYNTRUDE So much the better The Inca will have to redeem it to save himself from that disgrace, and the poor pawnbroker will get his money back Nobody would buy it, you know

THE INCA May I ask why?

ERMYNTRUDE. Well, look at it! Just look at it! I ask you!

THE INCA [*his moustache drooping ominously*] I am sorry to have to report to the Inca that you have no soul for fine art [*He rises sulkily*] The position of daughter-in-law to the Inca is not compatible with the tastes of a pig [*He attempts to take back the brooch*]

ERMYNTRUDE [*rising and retreating behind her chair with the brooch*] Here! you let that brooch alone You presented it to me on behalf of the Inca It is mine You said my appearance was satisfactory

THE INCA Your appearance is not satisfactory The Inca would not allow his son to marry you if the boy were on a desert island and you were the only other human being on it [*He strides up the room*]

ERMYNTRUDE [*calmly sitting down and replacing the case on the table*] How could he? There

would be no clergyman to marry us It would have to be quite morganatic

THE INCA [*returning*] Such an expression is out of place in the mouth of a princess aspiring to the highest destiny on earth, You have the morals of a dragoon. [*She receives this with a shriek of laughter He struggles with his sense of humor*] At the same time [*he sits down*] there is a certain coarse fun in the idea which compels me to smile [*He turns up his moustache and smiles*]

ERMYNTRUDE When I marry the Inca's son, Captain, I shall make the Inca order you to cut off that moustache It is too irresistible. Doesnt it fascinate everyone in Perusalem?

THE INCA [*leaning forward to her energetically*] By all the thunders of Thor, madam, it fascinates the whole world

ERMYNTRUDE What I like about you, Captain Duval, is your modesty.

THE INCA [*straightening up suddenly*] Woman do not be a fool

ERMYNTRUDE [*indignant*] Well!

THE INCA You must look facts in the face This moustache is an exact copy of the Inca's moustache Well, does the world occupy itself with the Inca's moustache or does it not? Does it ever occupy itself with anything else? If that is the truth, does its recognition constitute the Inca a coxcomb? Other potentates have moustaches even beards and moustaches. Does the world occupy itself with those beards and moustaches? Do the hawkers in the streets of every capital on the civilized globe sell ingenious cardboard representations of their faces on which, at the pulling of a simple string, the moustaches turn up and down, so—[*he makes his moustache turn up and down several times*]? No! I say No The Inca's moustache is so watched and studied that it has made his face the political barometer of the whole continent When that moustache goes up, culture rises with it Not what you call culture; but Kultur, a word so much more significant that I hardly understand it myself except when I am in specially good form When it goes down, millions of men perish

ERMYNTRUDE You know, if I had a moustache like that, it would turn my head. I should go mad Are you quite sure the Inca isnt mad?

THE INCA. How can he be mad, madam? What is sanity? The condition of the Inca's mind What is madness? The condition of

the people who disagree with the Inca
ERMYNTRUDE Then I am a lunatic because I dont like that ridiculous brooch

THE INCA. No, madam you are only an idiot.

ERMYNTRUDE Thank you.

THE INCA. Mark you it is not to be expected that you should see eye to eye with the Inca That would be presumption It is for you to accept without question or demur the assurance of your Inca that the brooch is a masterpiece.

ERMYNTRUDE. My Inca! Oh, come! I like that He is not my Inca yet

THE INCA He is everybody's Inca, madam His realm will yet extend to the confines of the habitable earth It is his divine right, and let those who dispute it look to themselves Properly speaking, all those who are now trying to shake his world predominance are not at war with him, but in rebellion against him

ERMYNTRUDE Well, he started it, you know.

THE INCA. Madam, be just When the hunters surround the lion, the lion will spring. The Inca had kept the peace for years Those who attacked him were steeped in blood, black blood, white blood, brown blood, yellow blood, blue blood The Inca had never shed a drop

ERMYNTRUDE He had only talked

THE INCA Only talked! Only talked! What is more glorious than talk? Can anyone in the world talk like him? Madam: when he signed the declaration of war, he said to his foolish generals and admirals, "Gentlemen: you will all be sorry for this " And they are. They know now that they had better have relied on the sword of the spirit in other words, on their Inca's talk, than on their murderous cannons The world will one day do justice to the Inca as the man who kept the peace with nothing but his tongue and his moustache While he talked: talked just as I am talking now to you, simply, quietly, sensibly, but GREATLY, there was peace; there was prosperity; Perusalem went from success to success He has been silenced for a year by the roar of trinitrotoluene and the bluster of fools, and the world is in ruins. What a tragedy! [*He is convulsed with grief*]

ERMYNTRUDE. Captain Duval I dont want to be unsympathetic, but suppose we get back to business

THE INCA Business! What business?

ERMYNTRUDE. Well, my business. You

want me to marry one of the Inca's sons I forget which

THE INCA As far as I can recollect the name, it is His Imperial Highness Prince Eitel William Frederick George Franz Josef Alexander Nicholas Victor Emmanuel Albert Theodore Wilson—

ERMYNTRUDE [*interrupting*] Oh, please, please, maynt I have one with a shorter name? What is he called at home?

THE INCA He is usually called Sonny, madam [*With great charm of manner*] But you will please understand that the Inca has no desire to pin you to any particular son There is Chips and Spots and Lulu and Pongo and the Corsair and the Piffler and Jack Johnson the Second, all unmarried At least not seriously married nothing, in short, that cannot be arranged They are all at your service

ERMYNTRUDE Are they all as clever and charming as their father?

THE INCA [*lifts his eyebrows pityingly, shrugs his shoulders, then, with indulgent paternal contempt*] Excellent lads, madam Very honest affectionate creatures I have nothing against them Pongo imitates farmyard sounds—cock-crowing and that sort of thing—extremely well Lulu plays Strauss's *Sinfonia Domestica* on the mouth organ really screamingly Chips keeps owls and rabbits Spots motor bicycles The Corsair commands canal barges and steers them himself The Piffler writes plays, and paints most abominably Jack Johnson trims ladies' hats, and boxes with professionals hired for that purpose He is invariably victorious Yes they all have their different little talents And also, of course, their family resemblances For example, they all smoke, and they none of them appreciate their father, who, by the way, is no mean painter, though the Piffler pretends to ridicule his efforts

ERMYNTRUDE Quite a large choice, eh?

THE INCA But very little to choose, believe me I should not recommend Pongo, because he snores so frightfully that it has been necessary to build him a sound-proof bedroom otherwise the royal family would get no sleep But any of the others would suit equally well—if you are really bent on marrying one of them

ERMYNTRUDE If! What is this? I never wanted to marry one of them I thought you

wanted me to

THE INCA I did, madam, but [*confidentially, flattering her*] you are not quite the sort of person I expected you to be, and I doubt whether any of these young degenerates would make you happy I trust I am not shewing any want of natural feeling when I say that from the point of view of a lively, accomplished, and beautiful woman [*Ermyntrude bows*] they might pall after a time I suggest that you might prefer the Inca himself

ERMYNTRUDE Oh, Captain, how could a humble person like myself be of any interest to a prince who is surrounded with the ablest and most far-reaching intellects in the world?

THE INCA [*explosively*] What on earth are you talking about, madam? Can you name a single man in the entourage of the Inca who is not a born fool?

ERMYNTRUDE Oh, how can you say that! There is Admiral von Cockpits—

THE INCA [*rising intolerantly and striding about the room*] Von Cockpits! Madam if Von Cockpits ever goes to heaven, before three weeks are over, the Angel Gabriel will be at war with the man in the moon

ERMYNTRUDE But General Von Schinken-burg—

THE INCA Schinkenburg! I grant you, Schinkenburg has a genius for defending market gardens Among market gardens he is invincible But what is the good of that? The world does not consist of market gardens Turn him loose in pasture and he is lost. The Inca has defeated all these generals again and again at manœuvres, and yet he has to give place to them in the field because he would be blamed for every disaster—accused of sacrificing the country to his vanity Vanity! Why do they call him vain? Just because he is one of the few men who are not afraid to live Why do they call themselves brave? Because they have not sense enough to be afraid to die Within the last year the world has produced millions of heroes Has it produced more than one Inca? [*He resumes his seat*]

ERMYNTRUDE Fortunately not, Captain I'd rather marry Chips

THE INCA [*making a wry face*] Chips! Oh no I wouldnt marry Chips

ERMYNTRUDE Why?

THE INCA [*whispering the secret*] Chips talks too much about himself

ERMYNTRUDE Well, what about Snooks?

THE INCA. Snooks? Who is he? Have I a son named Snooks? There are so many—*[nearly]* so many—that I often forget *[Casually]* But I wouldn't marry him, anyhow, if I were you

ERMYNTRUDE. But hasn't any of them inherited the family genius? Surely, if Providence has entrusted them with the care of Perusalem—if they are all descended from Bedrock the Great—

THE INCA *[interrupting her impatiently]* Madam! if you ask me, I consider Bedrock a grossly overrated monarch

ERMYNTRUDE *[shocked]* Oh, Captain! Take care! Incadisparagement

THE INCA I repeat, grossly overrated. Strictly between ourselves, I do not believe all this about Providence entrusting the care of sixty million human beings to the abilities of Chaps and the Piffier and Jack Johnson. I believe in individual genius. That is the Inca's secret. It must be. Why, hang it all, madam, if it were a mere family matter, the Inca's uncle would have been as great a man as the Inca. And—well, everybody knows what the Inca's uncle was

ERMYNTRUDE My experience is that the relatives of men of genius are always the greatest duffers imaginable

THE INCA Precisely. That is what proves that the Inca is a man of genius. His relatives are duffers

ERMYNTRUDE But bless my soul, Captain, if all the Inca's generals are incapables, and all his relatives duffers, Perusalem will be beaten in the war; and then it will become a republic, like France after 1871, and the Inca will be sent to St Helena

THE INCA *[triumphantly]* That is just what the Inca is playing for, madam. It is why he consented to the war.

ERMYNTRUDE. What!

THE INCA Aha! The fools talk of crushing the Inca; but they little know their man. Tell me this. Why did St Helena extinguish Napoleon?

ERMYNTRUDE I give it up

THE INCA Because, madam, with certain rather remarkable qualities, which I should be the last to deny, Napoleon lacked versatility. After all, any fool can be a soldier. We know that only too well in Perusalem, where every fool is a soldier. But the Inca has a thousand other resources. He is an architect.

Well, St Helena presents an unlimited field to the architect. He is a painter. Need I remind you that St Helena is still without a National Gallery? He is a composer. Napoleon left no symphonies in St Helena. Send the Inca to St Helena, madam, and the world will crowd thither to see his works as they crowd now to Athens to see the Acropolis, to Madrid to see the pictures of Velasquez, to Bayreuth to see the music dramas of that egotistical old rebel Richard Wagner, who ought to have been shot before he was forty, as indeed he very nearly was. Take this from me: hereditary monarchs are played out. The age for men of genius has come. The career is open to the talents: before ten years have elapsed every civilized country from the Carpathians to the Rocky Mountains will be a Republic

ERMYNTRUDE. Then goodbye to the Inca.

THE INCA. On the contrary, madam, the Inca will then have his first real chance. He will be unanimously invited by those Republics to return from his exile and act as Superpresident of all the republics

ERMYNTRUDE But won't that be a come-down for him? Think of it! after being Inca, to be a mere President!

THE INCA Well, why not! An Inca can do nothing. He is tied hand and foot. A constitutional monarch is openly called an india-rubber stamp. An emperor is a puppet. The Inca is not allowed to make a speech: he is compelled to take up a screed of flatulent twaddle written by some noodle of a minister and read it aloud. But look at the American President! He is the Allerhöchst, if you like. No, madam, believe me, there is nothing like Democracy, American Democracy. Give the people voting papers, good long voting papers, American fashion, and while the people are reading the voting papers the Government does what it likes

ERMYNTRUDE What! You too worship before the statue of Liberty, like the Americans?

THE INCA. Not at all, madam. The Americans do not worship the statue of Liberty. They have erected it in the proper place for a statue of Liberty: on its tomb. *[He turns down his moustaches]*

ERMYNTRUDE *[laughing]* Oh! You'd better not let them hear you say that, Captain

THE INCA Quite safe, madam, they would take it as a joke. *[He rises]* And now, prepare

yourself for a surprise [*She rises*] A shock
Brace yourself Steel yourself. And do not
be afraid

ERMYNTRUDE Whatever on earth can you
be going to tell me, Captain?

THE INCA Madam: I am no captain I—

ERMYNTRUDE You are the Inca in disguise

THE INCA Good heavens! how do you know
that? Who has betrayed me?

ERMYNTRUDE How could I help divining
it, sir? Who is there in the world like you?
Your magnetism—

THE INCA True I had forgotten my mag-
netism But you know now that beneath the
trappings of Imperial Majesty there is a
Man simple, frank, modest, unaffected,
colloquial a sincere friend, a natural human
being, a genial comrade, one eminently
calculated to make a woman happy You,
on the other hand, are the most charming
woman I have ever met. Your conversation
is wonderful I have sat here almost in silence
listening to your shrewd and penetrating
account of my character, my motives, if I
may say so, my talents Never has such
justice been done me never have I ex-
perienced such perfect sympathy Will you—
I hardly know how to put this—will you be
mine?

ERMYNTRUDE Oh, sir, you are married

THE INCA I am prepared to embrace the
Mahometan faith, which allows a man four
wives, if you will consent It will please the
Turks But I had rather you did not mention
it to the Inca-ess, if you dont mind

ERMYNTRUDE This is really charming of
you But the time has come for me to make
a revelation It is your Imperial Majesty's
turn now to brace yourself To steel yourself
I am not the princess I am—

THE INCA The daughter of my old friend
Archdeacon Daffodil Donkin, whose sermons
are read to me every evening after dinner
I never forget a face

ERMYNTRUDE You knew all along!

THE INCA [*bitterly, throwing himself into his
chair*] And you supposed that I, who have
been condemned to the society of princesses
all my wretched life, believed for a moment
that any princess that ever walked could
have your intelligence!

ERMYNTRUDE How clever of you, Sir! But
you cannot afford to marry me

THE INCA [*springing up*] Why not?

ERMYNTRUDE You are too poor You have

to eat war bread Kings nowadays belong
to the poorer classes. The King of England
does not even allow himself wine at dinner

THE INCA [*delighted*] Haw! Ha ha! Haw!
haw! [*He is convulsed with laughter, and finally
has to relieve his feelings by waltzing half round
the room*]

ERMYNTRUDE You may laugh, Sir, but I
really could not live in that style I am the
widow of a millionaire, ruined by your little
war

THE INCA A millionaire! What are million-
aires now, with the world crumbling?

ERMYNTRUDE Excuse me mine was a
hyphenated millionaire

THE INCA A highfalutin millionaire, you
mean [*Chuckling*] Haw! ha ha! really very
nearly a pun, that [*He sits down in her chair*]

ERMYNTRUDE [*revolled, sinking into his chair*]
I think it quite the worst pun I ever heard

THE INCA The best puns have all been
made years ago nothing remained but to
achieve the worst However, madam— [*He
rises majestically, and she is about to rise also*]
No I prefer a seated audience [*She falls back
into her seat at the imperious wave of his hand*]
So [*he clicks his heels*] Madam I recognize
my presumption in having sought the honor
of your hand As you say, I cannot afford it.
Victorious as I am, I am hopelessly bankrupt,
and the worst of it is, I am intelligent enough
to know it And I shall be beaten in conse-
quence, because my most implacable enemy,
though only a few months further away from
bankruptcy than myself, has not a ray of
intelligence, and will go on fighting until
civilization is destroyed, unless I, out of
sheer pity for the world, condescend to
capitulate

ERMYNTRUDE The sooner the better, Sir
Many fine young men are dying while you
wait

THE INCA [*stung painfully*] Why? Why
do they do it?

ERMYNTRUDE Because you make them

THE INCA Stuff! How can I? I am only one
man, and they are millions. Do you suppose
they would really kill each other if they
didnt want to, merely for the sake of my
beautiful eyes? Do not be deceived by news-
paper claptrap, madam I was swept away
by a passion not my own, which imposed
itself on me By myself I am nothing I dare
not walk down the principal street of my own
capital in a coat two years old, though the

sweeper of that street can wear one ten years old You talk of death as an unpopular thing You are wrong for years I gave them art, literature, science, prosperity, that they might live more abundantly, and they hated me, ridiculed me, caricatured me. Now that I give them death in its frightfullest forms, they are devoted to me. If you doubt me, ask those who for years have begged our taxpayers in vain for a few paltry thousands to spend on Life on the bodies and minds of the nation's children, on the beauty and healthfulness of its cities, on the honor and comfort of its worn-out workers They refused, and because they refused, death is let loose on them They grudged a few hundreds a year for their salvation they now pay millions a day for their own destruction and damnation And thus they call my doing! Let them say it, if they dare, before the judgment-seat at which they and I shall answer at last for what we have left undone no less than for what we have done [*Pulling himself together suddenly*] Madam I have the honor to be your most obedient [*He clicks his heels and bows*]

ERMYNTRUDE Sir! [*she curtsies*]

THE INCA [*turning at the door*] Oh, by the way, there is a princess, isn't there, somewhere on the premises?

ERMYNTRUDE There is Shall I fetch her?

THE INCA [*dubious*] Pretty awful, I suppose, eh?

ERMYNTRUDE About the usual thing.

THE INCA [*sighing*] Ah well! What can one expect? I don't think I need trouble her personally. Will you explain to her about the boys?

ERMYNTRUDE. I am afraid the explanation will fall rather flat without your magnetism

THE INCA [*returning to her and speaking very humanly*] You are making fun of me Why does everybody make fun of me? Is it fair?

ERMYNTRUDE [*seriously*] Yes it is fair What other defence have we poor common people against your shining armor, your mailed fist, your pomp and parade, your terrible power over us? Are these things fair?

THE INCA. Ah, well, perhaps, perhaps [*He looks at his watch*] By the way, there is time for a drive round the town and a cup of tea at the Zoo Quite a bearable band there, it does not play any patriotic airs I am sorry you will not listen to any more permanent arrangement, but if you would care to come—

ERMYNTRUDE [*eagerly*] Ratherrrrrr I shall be delighted

THE INCA [*cautiously*] In the strictest honor, you understand

ERMYNTRUDE Don't be afraid I promise to refuse any incorrect proposals

THE INCA [*enchanted*] Oh! Charming woman: how well you understand men!

He offers her his arm they go out together.

THE END

XXVIII

AUGUSTUS DOES HIS BIT

A TRUE-TO-LIFE FARCE

The Mayor's parlor in the Town Hall of Little Piffington Lord Augustus Highcastle, a distinguished member of the governing class, in the uniform of a colonel, and very well preserved at 45, is comfortably seated at a writing-table with his heels on it, reading The Morning Post The door faces him, a little to his left, at the other side of the room. The window is behind him In the fireplace, a gas stove On the table a bell button and a telephone Portraits of past Mayors, in robes and gold chains, adorn the walls An elderly clerk with a short white beard and whiskers, and a very red nose, shuffles in

AUGUSTUS [*hastily putting aside his paper and*

replacing his feet on the floor] Hullo! Who are you?

THE CLERK. The staff [*a slight impediment in his speech adds to the impression of incompetence produced by his age and appearance*]

AUGUSTUS You the staff! What do you mean, man?

THE CLERK. What I say There aint anybody else.

AUGUSTUS. Tush! Where are the others?

THE CLERK At the front

AUGUSTUS Quite right Most proper Why aint you at the front?

THE CLERK Over age Fiftyseven

AUGUSTUS But you can still do your bit. Many an older man is in the G R 's, or volunteering for home defence.

THE CLERK I have volunteered.

AUGUSTUS Then why are you not in uniform?

THE CLERK They said they wouldn't have me if I was given away with a pound of tea. Told me to go home and not be an old silly. [*A sense of unbearable wrong, til now only smouldering in him, bursts into flame*] Young Bill Knight, that I took with me, got two and sevenpence. I got nothing. Is it justice? This country is going to the dogs, if you ask me.

AUGUSTUS [*rising indignantly*] I do not ask you, sir, and I will not allow you to say such things in my presence. Our statesmen are the greatest known to history. Our generals are invincible. Our army is the admiration of the world. [*Furiously*] How dare you tell me that the country is going to the dogs!

THE CLERK Why did they give young Bill Knight two and sevenpence, and not give me even my tram fare? Do you call that being great statesmen? As good as robbing me, I call it.

AUGUSTUS That's enough. Leave the room. [*He sits down and takes up his pen, settling himself to work. The clerk shuffles to the door. Augustus adds, with cold politeness*] Send me the Secretary.

THE CLERK I'm the Secretary. I can't leave the room and send myself to you at the same time, can I?

AUGUSTUS Don't be insolent. Where is the gentleman I have been corresponding with Mr Horatio Floyd Beamish?

THE CLERK [*returning and bowing*] Here Me.

AUGUSTUS You! Ridiculous. What right have you to call yourself by a pretentious name of that sort?

THE CLERK You may drop the Horatio Floyd Beamish is good enough for me.

AUGUSTUS Is there nobody else to take my instructions?

THE CLERK It's me or nobody. And for two pips I'd chuck it. Don't you drive me too far. Old uns like me is up in the world now.

AUGUSTUS If we were not at war, I should discharge you on the spot for disrespectful behavior. But England is in danger, and I cannot think of my personal dignity at such a moment. [*Shouting at him*] Don't you think of yours, either, worm that you are, or I'll

have you arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act, double quick.

THE CLERK What do I care about the realm? They done me out of two and seven—

AUGUSTUS Oh, damn your two and seven! Did you receive my letters?

TIF CLERK Yes.

AUGUSTUS I addressed a meeting here last night—went straight to the platform from the train. I wrote to you that I should expect you to be present and report yourself. Why did you not do so?

TIF CLERK The police wouldn't let me on the platform.

AUGUSTUS Did you tell them who you were?

THE CLERK They knew who I was. That's why they wouldn't let me up.

AUGUSTUS This is too silly for anything. This town wants waking up. I made the best recruiting speech I ever made in my life, and not a man joined.

TIF CLERK What did you expect? You told them our gallant fellows is falling at the rate of a thousand a day in the big push. Dying for Little Pisslington, you says. Come and take their places, you says. That ain't the way to recruit.

AUGUSTUS But I expressly told them their widows would have pensions.

THE CLERK I heard you. Would have been all right if it had been the widows you wanted to get round.

AUGUSTUS [*rising angrily*] This town is inhabited by dastards. I say it with a full sense of responsibility, dastards! They call themselves Englishmen, and they are afraid to fight.

THE CLERK Afraid to fight! You should see them on a Saturday night.

AUGUSTUS Yes, they fight one another, but they won't fight the Germans.

THE CLERK They got grudges again one another. How can they have grudges again the Huns that they never saw? They've no imagination. That's what it is. Bring the Huns here, and they'll quarrel with them fast enough.

AUGUSTUS [*returning to his seat with a grunt of disgust*] Mf! They'll have them here if they're not careful. [*Seated*] Have you carried out my orders about the war saving?

THE CLERK Yes.

AUGUSTUS The allowance of petrol has been reduced by three quarters?

THE CLERK. It has

AUGUSTUS And you have told the motor-car people to come here and arrange to start munition work now that their motor business is stopped?

THE CLERK It aint stopped Theyre busier than ever

AUGUSTUS Busy at what?

THE CLERK Making small cars

AUGUSTUS New cars!

THE CLERK The old cars only do twelve miles to the gallon. Everybody has to have a car that will do thirtyfive now

AUGUSTUS Cant they take the train?

THE CLERK There aint no trains now Theyve tore up the rails and sent them to the front

AUGUSTUS Psha!

THE CLERK Well, we have to get about somehow

AUGUSTUS This is perfectly monstrous Not in the least what I intended

THE CLERK Hell—

AUGUSTUS Sir!

THE CLERK [*explaining*] Hell, they says, is paved with good intentions

AUGUSTUS [*springing to his feet*] Do you mean to insinuate that hell is paved with my good intentions—with the good intentions of His Majesty's Government?

THE CLERK I dont mean to insinuate anything until the Defence of the Realm Act is repealed It aint safe

AUGUSTUS They told me that this town had set an example to all England in the matter of economy I came down here to promise the Mayor a knighthood for 'his exertions

THE CLERK Thé Mayor! Where do I come in?

AUGUSTUS You dont come in You go out This is a fool of a place I'm greatly disappointed Deeply disappointed [*Flinging himself back into his chair*] Disgusted

THE CLERK What more can we do? Weve shut up everything. The picture gallery is shut The museum is shut The theatres and picture shows is shut I havnt seen a movy picture for six months.

AUGUSTUS Man, man do you want to see picture shows when the Hun is at the gate?

THE CLERK [*mournfully*] I dont now, though it drove me melancholy mad at first. I was on the point of taking a pennorth of rat poison—

AUGUSTUS Why didnt you?

THE CLERK Because a friend advised me to take to drink instead That saved my life, though it makes me very poor company in the mornings, as [*hiccuping*] perhaps youve noticed.

AUGUSTUS Well, upon my soul! You are not ashamed to stand there and confess yourself a disgusting drunkard

THE CLERK Well, what of it? We're at war now; and everything's changed Besides, I should lose my job here if I stood drinking at the bar I'm a respectable man and must buy my drink and take it home with me And they wont serve me with less than a quart If youd told me before the war that I could get through a quart of whiskey in a day, I shouldnt have believed you Thats the good of war it brings out powers in a man that he never suspected himself capable of You said so yourself in your speech last night

AUGUSTUS I did not know that I was talking to an imbecile You ought to be ashamed of yourself There must be an end of this drunken slacking I'm going to establish a new order of things here I shall come down every morning before breakfast until things are properly in train Have a cup of coffee and two rolls for me here every morning at half-past ten.

THE CLERK You cant have no rolls The only baker that baked rolls was a Hun, and he's been interned

AUGUSTUS. Quite right, too And was there no Englishman to take his place?

THE CLERK There was But he was caught spying; and they took him up to London and shot him

AUGUSTUS Shot an Englishman!

THE CLERK Well, it stands to reason if the Germans wanted a spy they wouldnt employ a German that everybody would suspect, dont it?

AUGUSTUS [*rising again*] Do you mean to say, you scoundrel, that an Englishman is capable of selling his country to the enemy for gold?

THE CLERK Not as a general thing I wouldnt say it, but theres men here would sell their own mothers for two coppers if they got the chance.

AUGUSTUS. Beamish it's an ill bird that fouls its own nest

THE CLERK. It wasnt me that let Little

Piffington get foul I dont belong to the governing classes. I only tell you why you cant have no rolls

AUGUSTUS [*intensely irritated*] Can you tell me where I can find an intelligent being to take my orders?

THE CLERK One of the street sweepers used to teach in the school until it was shut up for the sake of economy Will he do?

AUGUSTUS What! You mean to tell me that when the lives of the gallant fellows in our trenches, and the fate of the British Empire, depend on our keeping up the supply of shells, you are wasting money on sweeping the streets?

THE CLERK We have to We dropped it for a while, but the infant death rate went up something frightful

AUGUSTUS What matters the death rate of Little Piffington in a moment like this? Think of our gallant soldiers, not of your squalling infants

THE CLERK If you want soldiers you must have children You cant buy em in boxes, like toy soldiers

AUGUSTUS Beamish the long and the short of it is, you are no patriot Go downstairs to your office, and have that gas stove taken away and replaced by an ordinary grate The Board of Trade has urged on me the necessity for economizing gas

THE CLERK Our orders from the Minister of Munitions is to use gas instead of coal, because it saves material Which is it to be?

AUGUSTUS [*barling furiously at him*] Both! Dont criticize your orders obey them Yours not to reason why yours but to do and die Thats war [*Cooling down*] Have you anything else to say?

THE CLERK Yes I want a rise

AUGUSTUS [*reeling against the table in his horror*] A rise! Horatio Floyd Beamish do you know that we are at war?

THE CLERK [*feebly ironical*] I have noticed something about it in the papers Heard you mention it once or twice, now I come to think of it.

AUGUSTUS Our gallant fellows are dying in the trenches, and you want a rise!

THE CLERK What are they dying for? To keep me alive, aint it? Well, whats the good of that if I'm dead of hunger by the time they come back?

AUGUSTUS Everybody else is making

sacrifices without a thought of self, and you—

THE CLERK Not half, they aint Wheres the baker's sacrifice? Wheres the coal merchant's? Wheres the butcher's? Charging me double. thats how they sacrifice themselves Well, I want to sacrifice myself that way too Just double next Saturday double and not a penny less, or no secretary for you [*He stiffens himself shakily, and makes resolutely for the door*]

AUGUSTUS [*looking after him contemptuously*] Go miserable pro-German

THE CLERK [*rushing back and facing him*] Who are you calling a pro-German?

AUGUSTUS Another word, and I charge you under the Act with discouraging me Go

The clerk blanches and goes out, cowed

The telephone rings

AUGUSTUS [*taking up the telephone receiver*] Hallo . Yes who are you? . oh, Blueloo, is it? . Yes theres nobody in the room fire away What? A spy! A woman!

Yes I brought it down with me Do you suppose I'm such a fool as to let it out of my hands? Why, it gives a list of all our anti-aircraft emplacements from Ramsgate to Skegness The Germans would give a million for it—what? But how could she possibly know about it? I havnt mentioned it to a soul, except, of course, dear Lucy Oh, Toto and Lady Popham and that lot they dont count theyre all right I mean that I havnt mentioned it to any Germans . . Pooh! Dont you be nervous, old chap I know you think me a fool, but I'm not such a fool as all that If she tries to get it out of me I'll have her in the Tower before you ring up again [*The clerk returns*] Sh-sh! Somebody's just come in ring off Goodbye [*He hangs up the receiver*]

THE CLERK Are you engaged? [*His manner is strangely softened*]

AUGUSTUS What business is that of yours? However, if you will take the trouble to read the society papers for this week, you will see that I am engaged to the Honorable Lucy Popham, youngest daughter of—

THE CLERK That aint what I mean Can you see a female?

AUGUSTUS Of course I can see a female as easily as a male Do you suppose I'm blind?

THE CLERK You dont seem to follow me, somehow Theres a female downstairs what you might call a lady She wants to know can you see her if I let her up

AUGUSTUS Oh, you mean am I disengaged. Tell the lady I have just received news of the greatest importance which will occupy my entire attention for the rest of the day, and that she must write for an appointment

THE CLERK I'll ask her to explain her business to me I aint above talking to a handsome young female when I get the chance *[going]*

AUGUSTUS Stop Does she seem to be a person of consequence?

THE CLERK A regular marchioness, if you ask me

AUGUSTUS. Hm! Beautiful, did you say?

THE CLERK A human chrysanthemum, sir, believe me.

AUGUSTUS It will be extremely inconvenient for me to see her, but the country is in danger; and we must not consider our own comfort Think how our gallant fellows are suffering in the trenches! Shew her up *[The clerk makes for the door, whistling the latest popular love ballad]* Stop whistling instantly, sir This is not a casino

THE CLERK Aint it? You just wait til you see her *[He goes out]*

Augustus produces a mirror, a comb, and a pot of moustache pomade from the drawer of the writing-table, and sits down before the mirror to put some touches to his toilet.

The clerk returns, devotedly ushering a very attractive lady, brilliantly dressed She has a dainty wallet hanging from her wrist Augustus hastily covers up his toilet apparatus with The Morning Post, and rises in an attitude of pompous condescension

THE CLERK *[to Augustus]* Here she is *[To the lady]* May I offer you a chair, lady? *[He places a chair at the writing-table opposite Augustus, and steals out on tiptoe]*

AUGUSTUS Be seated, madam

THE LADY *[sitting down]* Are you Lord Augustus Highcastle?

AUGUSTUS *[sitting also]* Madam: I am

THE LADY *[with awe]* The great Lord Augustus?

AUGUSTUS I should not dream of describing myself so, madam; but no doubt I have impressed my countrymen—and *[bowing gallantly]* may I say my countrywomen—as having some exceptional claims to their consideration

THE LADY *[emotionally]* What a beautiful voice you have!

AUGUSTUS What you hear, madam, is the

voice of my country, which now takes a sweet and noble tone even in the harsh mouth of high officialism.

THE LADY Please go on You express yourself so wonderfully!

AUGUSTUS It would be strange indeed, if, after sitting on thirty-seven Royal Commissions, mostly as chairman, I had not mastered the art of public expression Even the Radical papers have paid me the high compliment of declaring that I am never more impressive than when I have nothing to say

THE LADY. I never read the Radical papers. All I can tell you is that what we women admire in you is not the politician, but the man of action, the heroic warrior, the *beau sabreur*.

AUGUSTUS *[gloomily]* Madam, I beg! Please! My military exploits are not a pleasant subject, unhappily.

THE LADY. Oh, I know, I know How shamefully you have been treated! What ingratitude! But the country is with you. The women are with you Oh, do you think all our hearts did not throb and all our nerves thrill when we heard how, when you were ordered to occupy that terrible quarry in Hulluch, and you swept into it at the head of your men like a sea-god riding on a tidal wave, you suddenly sprang over the top shouting "To Berlin! Forward!", dashed at the German army single-handed, and were cut off and made prisoner by the Huns

AUGUSTUS. Yes, madam, and what was my reward? They said I had disobeyed orders, and sent me home Have they forgotten Nelson in the Baltic? Has any British battle ever been won except by a bold individual initiative? I say nothing of professional jealousy. it exists in the army as elsewhere; but it is a bitter thought to me that the recognition denied me by my own country—or rather by the Radical cabal in the Cabinet which pursues my family with rancorous class hatred—that this recognition, I say, came to me at the hands of an enemy—of a rank Prussian

THE LADY You dont say so!

AUGUSTUS How else should I be here instead of starving to death in Ruhleben? Yes, madam: the Colonel of the Pomeranian regiment which captured me, after learning what I had done, and conversing for an hour with me on European politics and military

strategy, declared that nothing would induce him to deprive my country of my services, and set me free I offered, of course, to procure the release in exchange of a German officer of equal quality, but he would not hear of it. He was kind enough to say he could not believe that a German officer answering to that description existed [*With emotion*] I had my first taste of the ingratitude of my own country as I made my way back to our lines A shot from our front trench struck me in the head I still carry the flattened projectile as a trophy. [*He throws it on the table, the noise it makes testifies to its weight*] Had it penetrated to the brain I might never have sat on another Royal Commission Fortunately we have strong heads, we Highcastles Nothing has ever penetrated to our brains

THE LADY How thrilling! How simple! And how tragic! But you will forgive England? Remember England! Forgive her

AUGUSTUS [*with gloomy magnanimity*] It will make no difference whatever to my services to my country Though she slay me, yet will I, if not exactly trust in her, at least take my part in her government I am ever at my country's call Whether it be the embassy in a leading European capital, a governor-generalship in the tropics, or my humble mission here to make Little Piffington do its bit, I am always ready for the sacrifice Whilst England remains England, wherever there is a public job to be done you will find a Highcastle sticking to it And now, madam, enough of my tragic personal history You have called on business What can I do for you?

THE LADY You have relatives at the Foreign Office, have you not?

AUGUSTUS [*haughtily*] Madam the Foreign Office is staffed by my relatives exclusively

THE LADY Has the Foreign Office warned you that you are being pursued by a female spy who is determined to obtain possession of a certain list of gun emplacements—

AUGUSTUS [*interrupting her somewhat loftily*] All that is perfectly well known to this department, madam

THE LADY [*surprised and rather indignant*] Is it? Who told you? Was it one of your German brothers-in-law?

AUGUSTUS [*injured, remonstrating*] I have only three German brothers-in-law, madam Really, from your tone, one would suppose that I had several Pardon my sensitiveness

on that subject, but reports are continually being circulated that I have been shot as a traitor in the courtyard of the Ritz Hotel simply because I have German brothers-in-law [*With feeling*] If you had a German brother-in-law, madam, you would know that nothing else in the world produces so strong an anti-German feeling Life affords no keener pleasure than finding a brother-in-law's name in the German casualty list

THE LADY Nobody knows that better than I Wait until you hear what I have come to tell you you will understand me as no one else could Listen This spy, this woman—

AUGUSTUS [*all attention*] Yes?

THE LADY She is a German A Hun

AUGUSTUS Yes, yes She would be Continue

THE LADY She is my sister-in-law

AUGUSTUS [*deferentially*] I see you are well connected, madam, Proceed

THE LADY Need I add that she is my bitterest enemy?

AUGUSTUS May I— [*He proffers his hand They shake, fervently From this moment onward Augustus becomes more and more confidential, gallant, and charming*]

THE LADY Quite so Well, she is an intimate friend of your brother at the War Office, Hungerford Highcastle Blueloo as you call him I don't know why

AUGUSTUS [*explaining*] He was originally called The Singing Oyster, because he sang drawing-room ballads with such an extraordinary absence of expression He was then called the Blue Point for a season or two Finally he became Blueloo

THE LADY Oh, indeed I didn't know Well, Blueloo is simply infatuated with my sister-in-law, and he has rashly let out to her that this list is in your possession He forgot himself because he was in a towering rage at its being entrusted to you his language was terrible He ordered all the guns to be shifted at once

AUGUSTUS What on earth did he do that for?

THE LADY I can't imagine But this I know She made a bet with him that she would come down here and obtain possession of that list and get clean away into the street with it He took the bet on condition that she brought it straight back to him at the War Office

AUGUSTUS Good heavens! And you mean

to tell me that Blueloo was such a dolt as to believe that she could succeed? Does he take me for a fool?

THE LADY. Oh, impossible! He is jealous of your intellect. The bet is an insult to you dont you feel that? After what you have done for our country—

AUGUSTUS Oh, never mind that. It is the idiocy of the thing I look at. He'll lose his bet, and serve him right!

THE LADY You feel sure you will be able to resist the siren? I warn you she is very fascinating

AUGUSTUS You need have no fear, madam. I hope she will come and try it on. Fascination is a game that two can play at. For centuries the younger sons of the Highcastles have had nothing to do but fascinate attractive females when they were not sitting on Royal Commissions or on duty at Knightsbridge barracks. By Gad, madam, if the siren comes here she will meet her match.

THE LADY. I feel that. But if she fails to seduce you—

AUGUSTUS [*blushing*] Madam!

THE LADY [*continuing*] —from your allegiance—

AUGUSTUS Oh, that!

THE LADY —she will resort to fraud, to force, to anything. She will burgle your office, she will have you attacked and garotted at night in the street.

AUGUSTUS Pooh! I'm not afraid.

THE LADY. Oh, your courage will only tempt you into danger. She may get the list after all. It is true that the guns are moved. But she would win her bet.

AUGUSTUS [*cautiously*] You did not say that the guns were moved. You said that Blueloo had ordered them to be moved.

THE LADY Well, that is the same thing, isn't it?

AUGUSTUS Not quite—at the War Office. No doubt those guns will be moved, possibly even before the end of the war.

THE LADY Then you think they are there still! But if the German War Office gets the list—and she will copy it before she gives it back to Blueloo, you may depend on it—all is lost.

AUGUSTUS [*lazily*] Well, I should not go as far as that. [*Lowering his voice*] Will you swear to me not to repeat what I am going to say to you for if the British public knew that I had said it, I should be at once hounded

down as a pro-German.

THE LADY I will be silent as the grave. I swear it.

AUGUSTUS [*again taking it easily*] Well, our people have for some reason made up their minds that the German War Office is everything that our War Office is not—that it carries promptitude, efficiency, and organization to a pitch of completeness and perfection that must be, in my opinion, destructive to the happiness of the staff. My own view—which you are pledged, remember, not to betray—is that the German War Office is no better than any other War Office. I found that opinion on my observation of the characters of my brothers-in-law: one of whom, by the way, is on the German general staff. I am not at all sure that this list of gun emplacements would receive the smallest attention. You see, there are always so many more important things to be attended to. Family matters, and so on, you understand.

THE LADY Still, if a question were asked in the House of Commons—

AUGUSTUS The great advantage of being at war, madam, is that nobody takes the slightest notice of the House of Commons. No doubt it is sometimes necessary for a Minister to soothe the more seditious members of that assembly by giving a pledge or two, but the War Office takes no notice of such things.

THE LADY [*staring at him*] Then you think this list of gun emplacements doesn't matter!

AUGUSTUS By no means, madam. It matters very much indeed. If this spy were to obtain possession of the list, Blueloo would tell the story at every dinner table in London, and—

THE LADY And you might lose your post. Of course.

AUGUSTUS [*amazed and indignant*] I lose my post! What are you dreaming about, madam? How could I possibly be spared? There are hardly Highcastles enough at present to fill half the posts created by this war. No. Blueloo would not go that far. He is at least a gentleman. But I should be chaffed; and, frankly, I don't like being chaffed.

THE LADY. Of course not. Who does? It would never do. Oh, never, never.

AUGUSTUS I'm glad you see it in that light. And now, as a measure of security, I shall put that list in my pocket. [*He begins searching vainly from drawer to drawer in the writing-*

table] Where on earth—? What the dickens did I—? That's very odd I— Where the deuce—? I thought I had put it in the— Oh here it is! No this is Lucy's last letter.

THE LADY [*clergiacally*] Lucy's Last Letter! What a title for a picture play!

AUGUSTUS [*delighted*] Yes it is, isn't it? Lucy appeals to the imagination like no other woman. By the way [*handing over the letter*] I wonder could you read it for me? Lucy is a darling girl, but I really can't read her writing. In London I get the office typist to decipher it and make me a typed copy, but here there is nobody.

THE LADY [*puzzling over it*] It is really almost illegible. I think the beginning is meant for "Dearest Gus."

AUGUSTUS [*cagerly*] Yes that is what she usually calls me. Please go on.

THE LADY [*trying to decipher it*] "What a"—"what a"—oh yes "what a forgetful old"—something—"you are!" I can't make out the word.

AUGUSTUS [*greatly interested*] Is it blighter? That is a favorite expression of hers.

THE LADY I think so. At all events it begins with a B [*Reading*] "What a forgetful old—" [*She is interrupted by a knock at the door*]

AUGUSTUS [*impatiently*] Come in [*The clerk enters, clean shaven and in khaki, with an official paper and an envelope in his hand*] What is this ridiculous mummery, sir?

THE CLERK [*coming to the table and exhibiting his uniform to both*] They've passed me. The recruiting officer come for me. I've had my two and seven.

AUGUSTUS [*rising wrathfully*] I shall not permit it. What do they mean by taking my officestaff? Good God! they will be taking our hunt servants next [*Confronting the clerk*] What did the man mean? What did he say?

THE CLERK He said that now you was on the job we'd want another million men, and he was going to take the old-age pensioners or anyone he could get.

AUGUSTUS And did you dare to knock at my door and interrupt my business with this lady to repeat this man's ineptitudes?

THE CLERK No I come because the waiter from the hotel brought this paper. You left it on the coffee-room breakfast-table this morning.

THE LADY [*intercepting it*] It is the list. Good heavens!

THE CLERK [*proffering the envelope*] He says

he thinks this is the envelope belonging to it.

THE LADY [*snatching the envelope also*] Yes! Addressed to you Lord Augustus! [*Augustus comes back to the table to look at it*] Oh, how imprudent! Everybody would guess its importance with your name on it. Fortunately I have some letters of my own here [*opening her wallet*] Why not hide it in one of my envelopes? then no one will dream that the enclosure is of any political value [*Taking out a letter, she crosses the room towards the window, whispering to Augustus as she passes him*] Get rid of that man.

AUGUSTUS [*haughtily approaching the clerk, who humorously makes a paralytic attempt to stand at attention*] Have you any further business here, pray?

THE CLERK Am I to give the waiter anything, or will you do it yourself?

AUGUSTUS Which waiter is it? The English one?

THE CLERK No the one that calls himself a Swiss. Shouldn't wonder if he'd made a copy of that paper.

AUGUSTUS Keep your impertinent surmises to yourself, sir. Remember that you are in the army now, and let me have no more of your civilian insubordination. Attention! Left turn! Quick march!

THE CLERK [*stolidly*] I dunno what you mean.

AUGUSTUS Go to the guard-room and report yourself for disobeying orders. Now do you know what I mean?

THE CLERK Now look here I ain't going to argue with you—

AUGUSTUS Nor I with you. Out with you.

He seizes the clerk, and rushes him through the door. The moment the lady is left alone, she snatches a sheet of official paper from the stationery rack, folds it so that it resembles the list, compares the two to see that they look exactly alike, whips the list into her wallet, and substitutes the facsimile for it. Then she listens for the return of Augustus. A crash is heard, as of the clerk falling downstairs.

Augustus returns and is about to close the door when the voice of the clerk is heard from below.

THE CLERK I'll have the law of you for this, I will.

AUGUSTUS [*shouting down to him*] There's no more law for you, you scoundrel. You're a soldier now [*He shuts the door and comes to the lady*] Thank heaven, the war has given us the upper hand of these fellows at last. Excuse my violence, but discipline is absolutely

necessary in dealing with the lower middle classes

THE LADY. Serve the insolent creature right! Look! I have found you a beautiful envelope for the list, an unmistakeable lady's envelope. [*She puts the sham list into her envelope and hands it to him*]

AUGUSTUS Excellent Really very clever of you [*Slyly*] Come would you like to have a peep at the list [*beginning to take the blank paper from the envelope*]?

THE LADY [*on the brink of detection*] No no. Oh, please, no.

AUGUSTUS Why? It wont bite you [*drawing it out further*]

THE LADY [*snatching at his hand*] Stop Remember, if there should be an inquiry, you must be able to swear that you never shewed that list to a mortal soul.

AUGUSTUS Oh, that is a mere form. If you are really curious—

THE LADY I am not I couldnt bear to look at it One of my dearest friends was blown to pieces by an aircraft gun, and since then I have never been able to think of one without horror

AUGUSTUS You mean it was a real gun, and actually went off How sad! how sad! [*He pushes the sham list back into the envelope, and pockets it*]

THE LADY. Ah! [*great sigh of relief*] And now, Lord Augustus, I have taken up too much of your valuable time Goodbye

AUGUSTUS What! Must you go?

THE LADY. You are so busy.

AUGUSTUS Yes, but not before lunch, you know I never can do much before lunch And I'm no good at all in the afternoon From five to six is my real working time Must you really go?

THE LADY I must, really I have done my business very satisfactorily. Thank you ever so much [*She proffers her hand*]

AUGUSTUS [*shaking it affectionately as he leads her to the door, but first pressing the bell button with his left hand*] Goodbye Goodbye So sorry to lose you Kind of you to come; but there was no real danger You see, my dear little lady, all this talk about war saving, and secrecy, and keeping the blinds down at night, and so forth, is all very well, but unless it's carried out with intelligence, believe me, you may waste a pound to save a penny, you may let out all sorts of secrets to the enemy; you may guide the Zeppelins right on to your

own chumneys That's where the ability of the governing class comes in. Shall the fellow call a taxi for you?

THE LADY. No, thanks I prefer walking Goodbye Again, many, many thanks

She goes out. Augustus returns to the writing-table smiling, and takes another look at himself in the mirror. The clerk returns with his head bandaged, carrying a poker

THE CLERK What did you ring for? [*Augustus hastily drops the mirror*] Dont you come nigh me or I'll split your head with this poker, thick as it is

AUGUSTUS It does not seem to me an exceptionally thick poker. I rang for you to shew the lady out

THE CLERK She's gone She run out like a rabbit I ask myself, why was she in such a hurry?

THE LADY'S VOICE [*from the street*] Lord Augustus Lord Augustus

THE CLERK. She's calling you

AUGUSTUS [*running to the window and throwing it up*] What is it? Wont you come up?

THE LADY Is the clerk there?

AUGUSTUS Yes. Do you want him?

THE LADY. Yes

AUGUSTUS The lady wants you at the window.

THE CLERK [*rushing to the window and putting down the poker*] Yes, maam? Here I am, maam What is it, maam?

THE LADY. I want you to witness that I got clean away into the street I am coming up now.

The two men stare at one another.

THE CLERK Wants me to witness that she got clean away into the street!

AUGUSTUS What on earth does she mean?

The lady returns

THE LADY. May I use your telephone?

AUGUSTUS Certainly Certainly [*Taking the receiver down*] What number shall I get you?

THE LADY. The War Office, please

AUGUSTUS. The War Office!

THE LADY. If you will be so good.

AUGUSTUS But— Oh, very well [*Into the receiver*] Hallo This is the Town Hall Recruiting Office. Give me Colonel Bogey, sharp.

A pause.

THE CLERK [*breaking the painful silence*] I dont think I'm awake. This is a dream of a movie picture, this is

AUGUSTUS [*his ear at the receiver*] Shut up, will you? [*Into the telephone*] What? . . . [*To the*

latest? Which of them do you think is most likely to be in power tomorrow morning?

SCHNEIDEKIND Well, the provisional government was going strong yesterday. But today they say that the prime minister has shot himself, and that the extreme left fellow has shot all the others

STRAMMFEST Yes thats all very well; but these fellows always shoot themselves with blank cartridge.

SCHNEIDEKIND Still, even the blank cartridge means backing down I should send the report to the Maximilianists

STRAMMFEST Theyre no stronger than the Oppidoshavians, and in my own opinion the Moderate Red Revolutionaries are as likely to come out on top as either of them

SCHNEIDEKIND I can easily put a few carbon sheets in the typewriter and send a copy each to the lot

STRAMMFEST. Waste of paper You might as well send reports to an infant school [*He throws his head on the table with a groan*]

SCHNEIDEKIND Tired out, sir?

STRAMMFEST O Schneidekind, Schneidekind, how can you bear to live?

SCHNEIDEKIND At my age, sir, I ask myself how can I bear to die?

STRAMMFEST You are young, young and heartless You are excited by the revolution you are attached to abstract things like liberty But my family has served the Panjandrams of Beotia faithfully for seven centuries The Panjandrams have kept our place for us at their courts, honored us, promoted us, shed their glory on us, made us what we are When I hear you young men declaring that you are fighting for civilization, for democracy, for the overthrow of militarism, I ask myself how can a man shed his blood for empty words used by vulgar tradesmen and common laborers mere wind and stink. [*He rises, exalted by his theme*] A king is a splendid reality, a man raised above us like a god You can see him; you can kiss his hand; you can be cheered by his smile and terrified by his frown I would have died for my Panjandrum as my father died for his father. Your toiling millions were only too honored to receive the toes of our boots in the proper spot for them when they displeased their betters And now what is left in life for me? [*He relapses into his chair discouraged*] My Panjandrum is deposed and transported to herd with convicts. The army,

his pride and glory, is paraded to hear seditious speeches from penniless rebels, with the colonel actually forced to take the chair and introduce the speaker. I myself am made Commander-in-Chief by my own solicitor a Jew, Schneidekind! a Hebrew Jew! It seems only yesterday that these things would have been the ravings of a madman today they are the commonplaces of the gutter press I live now for three objects only to defeat the enemy, to restore the Panjandrum, and to hang my solicitor

SCHNEIDEKIND Be careful, sir: these are dangerous views to utter nowadays. What if I were to betray you?

STRAMMFEST What!

SCHNEIDEKIND I wont, of course my own father goes on just like that, but suppose I did?

STRAMMFEST [*chuckling*] I should accuse you of treason to the Revolution, my lad, and they would immediately shoot you, unless you cried and asked to see your mother before you died, when they would probably change their minds and make you a brigadier Enough [*He rises and expands his chest*] I feel the better for letting myself go To business [*He takes up a telegram, opens it, and is thunderstruck by its contents*] Great heaven! [*He collapses into his chair*] This is the worst blow of all.

SCHNEIDEKIND What has happened? Are we beaten?

STRAMMFEST Man do you think that a mere defeat could strike me down as this news does I, who have been defeated thirteen times since the war began? O, my master, my master, my Panjandrum! [*he is convulsed with sobs*]

SCHNEIDEKIND They have killed him?

STRAMMFEST. A dagger has been struck through his heart—

SCHNEIDEKIND Good God!

STRAMMFEST —and through mine, through mine.

SCHNEIDEKIND [*relieved*] Oh a metaphorical dagger I thought you meant a real one. What has happened?

STRAMMFEST His daughter, the Grand Duchess Annajanska, she whom the Panjandrina loved beyond all her other children, has—has—[*he cannot finish*]

SCHNEIDEKIND Committed suicide?

STRAMMFEST No. Better if she had Oh, far far better.

SCHNEIDEKIND [*he hushed toward the door*]

Church?

STRAMMFEST [*shocked*] Certainly not Do not blaspheme, young man

SCHNEIDEKIND Asked for the vote?

STRAMMFEST I would have given it to her with both hands to save her from this

SCHNEIDEKIND Save her from what? Dash it, sir, out with it

STRAMMFEST She has joined the Revolution

SCHNEIDEKIND But so have you, sir We've all joined the Revolution She doesn't mean it any more than we do

STRAMMFEST Heaven grant you may be right! But that is not the worst She has eloped with a young officer Eloped, Schneidekind, eloped!

SCHNEIDEKIND [*not particularly impressed*] Yes, sir

STRAMMFEST Annajanska, the beautiful, the innocent, my master's daughter! [*He buries his face in his hands*]

The telephone rings

SCHNEIDEKIND [*taking the receiver*] Yes G H Q Yes Don't bawl I'm not a general. Who is it speaking? Why didn't you say so? don't you know your duty? Next time you will lose your stripe Oh, they've made you a colonel, have they? Well, they've made me a field-marshal now what have you to say? Look here what did you ring up for? I can't spend the day here listening to your cheek. What! the Grand Duchess! [*Strammfest starts*] Where did you catch her?

STRAMMFEST [*snatching the telephone and listening for the answer*] Speak louder, will you I am a General I know that, you dolt. Have you captured the officer that was with her? Damnation! You shall answer for this you let him go he bribed you You must have seen him the fellow is in the full dress court uniform of the Panderobajensky Hussars I give you twelve hours to catch him or . . . what's that you say about the devil? Are you swearing at me, you Thousand thunders! [*To Schneidekind*] The swine says that the Grand Duchess is a devil incarnate [*Into the telephone*] Filthy traitor is that the way you dare speak of the daughter of our anointed Panjandrum? I'll—

SCHNEIDEKIND [*pulling the telephone from his lips*] Take care, sir

STRAMMFEST I won't take care I'll have him shot Let go that telephone

SCHNEIDEKIND But for her own sake, sir—

STRAMMFEST Eh?

SCHNEIDEKIND For her own sake they had better send her here She will be safe in your hands

STRAMMFEST [*yielding the receiver*] You are right Be civil to him I should choke [*he sits down*]

SCHNEIDEKIND [*into the telephone*] Hello Never mind all that it's only a fellow here who has been fooling with the telephone I had to leave the room for a moment Wash out, and send the girl along We'll jolly soon teach her to behave herself here . . . Oh, you've sent her already Then why the devil didn't you say so, you— [*he hangs up the telephone angrily*] Just fancy they started her off this morning and all this is because the fellow likes to get on the telephone and hear himself talk now that he is a colonel [*The telephone rings again He snatches the receiver furiously*] What's the matter now? [*To the General*] It's our own people downstairs [*Into the receiver*] Here! do you suppose I've nothing else to do than to hang on to the telephone all day? . . . What's that? Not men enough to hold her! What do you mean? [*To the General*] She is there, sir

STRAMMFEST Tell them to send her up I shall have to receive her without even rising, without kissing her hand, to keep up appearances before the escort It will break my heart

SCHNEIDEKIND [*into the receiver*] Send her up Tcha! [*He hangs up the receiver*] He says she is half way up already they couldn't hold her

The Grand Duchess bursts into the room, dragging with her two exhausted soldiers hanging on desperately to her arms She is enveloped from head to foot by a fur-lined cloak, and wears a fur cap

SCHNEIDEKIND [*pointing to the bench*] At the word Go, place your prisoner on the bench in a sitting posture, and take your seats right and left of her Go

The two soldiers make a supreme effort to force her to sit down She flings them back so that they are forced to sit on the bench to save themselves from falling backwards over it, and is herself dragged into sitting between them The second soldier, holding on tight to the Grand Duchess with one hand, produces papers with the other, and waves them towards Schneidekind, who takes them from him and passes them on to the General He opens them and reads them with a grave expression

SCHNEIDEKIND Be good enough to wait,

prisoner, until the General has read the papers on your case

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*to the soldiers*] Let go [*To Strammfest*] Tell them to let go, or I'll upset the bench backwards and bash our three heads on the floor

FIRST SOLDIER No, little mother Have mercy on the poor.

STRAMMFEST [*growling over the edge of the paper he is reading*] Hold your tongue.

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*blasing*] Me, or the soldier?

STRAMMFEST [*horrified*] The soldier, madam.

THE GRAND DUCHESS Tell him to let go

STRAMMFEST Release the lady

The soldiers take their hands off her One of them wipes his fevered brow. The other sucks his wrist

SCHNEIDEKIND [*fiercely*] 'tention!

The two soldiers sit up stiffly.

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh, let the poor man suck his wrist. It may be poisoned I bit it

STRAMMFEST [*shocked*] You bit a common soldier!

GRAND DUCHESS Well, I offered to cauterize it with the poker in the office stove But he was afraid. What more could I do?

SCHNEIDEKIND Why did you bite him, prisoner?

THE GRAND DUCHESS He would not let go

STRAMMFEST Did he let go when you bit him?

THE GRAND DUCHESS No [*Patting the soldier on the back*] You should give the man a cross for his devotion I could not go on eating him; so I brought him along with me

STRAMMFEST Prisoner—

THE GRAND DUCHESS Dont call me prisoner, General Strammfest. My grandmother dandled you on her knee

STRAMMFEST [*bursting into tears*] O God, yes Believe me, my heart is what it was then

THE GRAND DUCHESS Your brain also is what it was then. I will not be addressed by you as prisoner

STRAMMFEST. I may not, for your own sake, call you by your rightful and most sacred titles What am I to call you?

THE GRAND DUCHESS The Revolution has made us comrades Call me comrade

STRAMMFEST I had rather die

THE GRAND DUCHESS Then call me Anna-janska; and I will call you Peter Piper, as grandmamma did

STRAMMFEST [*painfully agitated*] Schneide-

kind you must speak to her I cannot—[*he breaks down*]

SCHNEIDEKIND [*officially*] The Republic of Beotia has been compelled to confine the Panjandrum and his family, for their own safety, within certain bounds You have broken those bounds

STRAMMFEST [*taking the word from him*] You are—I must say it—a prisoner What am I to do with you?

THE GRAND DUCHESS You should have thought of that before you arrested me.

STRAMMFEST Come, come, prisoner! do you know what will happen to you if you compel me to take a sterner tone with you?

THE GRAND DUCHESS. No. But I know what will happen to you

STRAMMFEST Pray what, prisoner?

THE GRAND DUCHESS Clergyman's sore throat.

Schneidekind splutters drops a paper; and conceals his laughter under the table

STRAMMFEST [*thunderously*] Lieutenant Schneidekind

SCHNEIDEKIND [*in a stifled voice*] Yes, sir. [*The table vibrates visibly*]

STRAMMFEST Come out of it, you fool: youre upsetting the ink

Schneidekind emerges, red in the face with suppressed mirth

STRAMMFEST Why dont you laugh? Dont you appreciate Her Imperial Highness's joke?

SCHNEIDEKIND [*suddenly becoming solemn*] I dont want to, sir.

STRAMMFEST Laugh at once, sir I order you to laugh.

SCHNEIDEKIND [*with a touch of temper*] I really cant, sir. [*He sits down decisively*]

STRAMMFEST [*growling at him*] Yah! [*He turns impressively to the Grand Duchess*] Your Imperial Highness desires me to address you as comrade?

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*rising and waving a red handkerchief*] Long live the Revolution, comrade!

STRAMMFEST [*rising and saluting*] Proletarians of all lands, unite Lieutenant Schneidekind you will rise and sing the Marseillaise.

SCHNEIDEKIND [*rising*] But I cannot, sir. I have no voice, no ear

STRAMMFEST. Then sit down, and bury your shame in your typewriter [*Schneidekind sits down*] Comrade Anna-janska. you have

eloped with a young officer

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*astounded*] General Strammfest you lie

STRAMMFEST Denial, comrade, is useless. It is through that officer that your movements have been traced [*The Grand Duchess is suddenly enlightened, and seems amused. Strammfest continues in a forensic manner*] He joined you at the Golden Anchor in Hakonsburg. You gave us the slip there, but the officer was traced to Potterdam, where you rejoined him and went alone to Premyslop. What have you done with that unhappy young man? Where is he?

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*pretending to whisper an important secret*] Where he has always been

STRAMMFEST [*eagerly*] Where is that?

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*impetuously*] In your imagination I came alone. I am alone. Hundreds of officers travel every day from Hakonsburg to Potterdam. What do I know about them?

STRAMMFEST They travel in khaki. They do not travel in full dress court uniform as this man did.

SCHNEIDEKIND Only officers who are eloping with grand duchesses wear court uniform. Otherwise the grand duchesses could not be seen with them.

STRAMMFEST Hold your tongue [*Schneidekind, in high dudgeon, folds his arms and retires from the conversation. The General returns to his paper and to his examination of the Grand Duchess*] This officer travelled with your passport. What have you to say to that?

THE GRAND DUCHESS Bosh! How could a man travel with a woman's passport?

STRAMMFEST It is quite simple, as you very well know. A dozen travellers arrive at the boundary. The official collects their passports. He counts twelve persons, then counts the passports. If there are twelve, he is satisfied.

THE GRAND DUCHESS Then how do you know that one of the passports was mine?

STRAMMFEST A waiter at the Potterdam Hotel looked at the officer's passport when he was in his bath. It was your passport.

THE GRAND DUCHESS Stuff! Why did he not have me arrested?

STRAMMFEST When the waiter returned to the hotel with the police the officer had vanished, and you were there with your own passport. They knouted him.

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh! Strammfest send

these men away. I must speak to you alone. STRAMMFEST [*rising in horror*] No, this is the last straw. I cannot consent. It is impossible, utterly, eternally impossible, that a daughter of the Imperial House should speak to anyone alone, were it even her own husband.

THE GRAND DUCHESS You forget that there is an exception. She may speak to a child alone [*She rises*] Strammfest, you have been dandled on my grandmother's knee. By that gracious action the dowager Panjandrina made you a child forever. So did Nature, by the way. I order you to speak to me alone. Do you hear? I order you. For seven hundred years no member of your family has ever disobeyed an order from a member of mine. Will you disobey me?

STRAMMFEST There is an alternative to obedience. The dead cannot disobey [*He takes out his pistol and places the muzzle against his temple*].

SCHNEIDEKIND [*snatching the pistol from him*] For God's sake, General—

STRAMMFEST [*attacking him furiously to recover the weapon*] Dog of a subaltern, restore that pistol, and my honor.

SCHNEIDEKIND [*reaching out with the pistol to the Grand Duchess*] Take it quick, he is as strong as a bull.

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*snatching it*] Aha! Leave the room, all of you except the General. At the double! lightning! electricity! [*she fires shot after shot, spattering bullets about the ankles of the soldiers. They fly precipitately. She turns to Schneidekind, who has by this time been flung on the floor by the General. You too*] [*He scrambles up*] March [*He flies to the door*].

SCHNEIDEKIND [*turning at the door*] For your own sake, comrade—

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*indignantly*] Comrade! You!!! Go [*She fires two more shots. He vanishes*].

STRAMMFEST [*making an impulsive movement towards her*] My Imperial Mistress—

THE GRAND DUCHESS Stop. I have one bullet left, if you attempt to take this from me [*putting the pistol to her temple*].

STRAMMFEST [*recoiling, and covering his eyes with his hands*] No, no, put it down, put it down. I promise everything. I swear anything, put it down, I implore you.

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*throwing it on the table*] There!

STRAMMFEST [*uncovering his eyes*] Thank God!

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*gently*] Strammfest: I am your comrade Am I nothing more to you?

STRAMMFEST [*falling on his knee*] You are, God help me, all that is left to me of the only power I recognize on earth [*he kisses her hand*]

THE GRAND DUCHESS [*indulgently*] Idolater! When will you learn that our strength has never been in ourselves, but in your illusions about us? [*She shakes off her kindliness, and sits down in his chair*] Now tell me, what are your orders? And do you mean to obey them?

STRAMMFEST [*starting like a goaded ox, and blundering fretfully about the room*] How can I obey six different dictators, and not one gentleman among the lot of them? One of them orders me to make peace with the foreign enemy Another orders me to offer all the neutral countries 48 hours to choose between adopting his views on the single tax and being instantly invaded and annihilated A third orders me to go to a damned Socialist Conference and explain that Beotia will allow no annexations and no indemnities, and merely wishes to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth throughout the universe [*He finishes behind Schneidekind's chair*]

THE GRAND DUCHESS Damn their trifling!

STRAMMFEST I thank Your Imperial Highness from the bottom of my heart for that expression Europe thanks you

THE GRAND DUCHESS M'yes, but—[*rising*] Strammfest you know that your cause—the cause of the dynasty—is lost

STRAMMFEST You must not say so It is treason, even from you [*He sinks, discouraged, into the chair, and covers his face with his hand*]

THE GRAND DUCHESS Do not deceive yourself, General never again will a Panjandrum reign in Beotia. [*She walks slowly across the room, brooding bitterly, and thinking aloud*] We are so decayed, so out of date, so feeble, so wicked in our own despite, that we have come at last to will our own destruction

STRAMMFEST You are uttering blasphemy

THE GRAND DUCHESS. All great truths begin as blasphemies. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot set up my father's throne again If they could, you would have done it, would you not?

STRAMMFEST God knows I would!

THE GRAND DUCHESS You really mean that? You would keep the people in their hopeless squalid misery? you would fill those infamous

prisons again with the noblest spirits in the land? you would thrust the rising sun of liberty back into the sea of blood from which it has risen? And all because there was in the middle of the dirt and ugliness and horror a little patch of court splendor in which you could stand with a few orders on your uniform and yawn day after day and night after night in unspeakable boredom until your grave yawned wider still, and you fell into it because you had nothing better to do. How can you be so stupid, so heartless?

STRAMMFEST You must be mad to think of royalty in such a way I never yawned at court. The dogs yawned, but that was because they were dogs they had no imagination, no ideals, no sense of honor and dignity to sustain them

THE GRAND DUCHESS My poor Strammfest you were not often enough at court to tire of it You were mostly soldiering, and when you came home to have a new order pinned on your breast, your happiness came through looking at my father and mother and at me, and adoring us Was that not so?

STRAMMFEST Do you reproach me with it? I am not ashamed of it

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh, it was all very well for you, Strammfest But think of me, of me! standing there for you to gape at, and knowing that I was no goddess, but only a girl like any other girl! It was cruelty to animals you could have stuck up a wax doll or a golden calf to worship; it would not have been bored

STRAMMFEST Stop, or I shall renounce my allegiance to you I have had women flogged for such seditious chatter as this

THE GRAND DUCHESS Do not provoke me to send a bullet through your head for reminding me of it

STRAMMFEST You always had low tastes You are no true daughter of the Panjandrums you are a changeling, thrust into the Panjandrina's bed by some profligate nurse. I have heard stories of your childhood. of how—

THE GRAND DUCHESS Ha, ha! Yes. they took me to the circus when I was a child It was my first moment of happiness, my first glimpse of heaven I ran away and joined the troupe They caught me and dragged me back to my gilded cage, but I had tasted freedom, and they never could make me forget it

STRAMMFEST Freedom! To be the slave of an acrobat! to be exhibited to the public! to—

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh, I was trained to that. I had learnt that part of the business at court

STRAMMFEST You had not been taught to strip yourself half naked and turn head over heels—

THE GRAND DUCHESS Man I wanted to get rid of my swaddling clothes and turn head over heels I wanted to, I wanted to, I wanted to I can do it still Shall I do it now?

STRAMMFEST If you do, I swear I will throw myself from the window so that I may meet your parents in heaven without having my medals torn from my breast by them

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh, you are incorrigible You are mad, infatuated You will not believe that we royal divinities are mere common flesh and blood even when we step down from our pedestals and tell you ourselves what a fool you are I will argue no more with you I will use my power At a word from me your men will turn against you already half of them do not salute you, and you dare not punish them you have to pretend not to notice it

STRAMMFEST It is not for you to taunt me with that if it is so

THE GRAND DUCHESS. [*haughtily*] Taunt! I condescend to taunt! To taunt a common General! You forget yourself, sir

STRAMMFEST [*dropping on his knee submissively*] Now at last you speak like your royal self

THE GRAND DUCHESS Oh, Strammfest, Strammfest, they have driven your slavery into your very bones Why did you not spit in my face?

STRAMMFEST [*rising with a shudder*] God forbid!

THE GRAND DUCHESS Well, since you will be my slave, take your orders from me I have not come here to save our wretched family and our bloodstained crown I am come to save the Revolution

STRAMMFEST Stupid as I am, I have come to think that I had better save that than save nothing But what will the Revolution do for the people? Do not be deceived by the fine speeches of the revolutionary leaders and the pamphlets of the revolutionary writers How much liberty is there where they have gained the upper hand? Are they not hanging, shooting, imprisoning as much

as ever we did? Do they ever tell the people the truth? No if the truth does not suit them they spread lies instead, and make it a crime to tell the truth

THE GRAND DUCHESS Of course they do Why should they not?

STRAMMFEST [*hardly able to believe his ears*] Why should they not!

THE GRAND DUCHESS Yes why should they not? We did it You did it, whip in hand you flogged women for teaching children to read

STRAMMFEST To read sedition To read Karl Marx

THE GRAND DUCHESS Pshaw! How could they learn to read the Bible without learning to read Karl Marx? Why do you not stand to your guns and justify what you did, instead of making silly excuses Do you suppose I think flogging a woman worse than flogging a man? I, who am a woman myself!

STRAMMFEST I am at a loss to understand your Imperial Highness You seem to me to contradict yourself

THE GRAND DUCHESS, Nonsense! I say that if the people cannot govern themselves, they must be governed by somebody. If they will not do their duty without being half forced and half humbugged, somebody must force them and humbug them Some energetic and capable minority must always be in power Well, I am on the side of the energetic minority whose principles I agree with The Revolution is as cruel as we were, but its aims are my aims Therefore I stand for the Revolution

STRAMMFEST You do not know what you are saying This is pure Bolshevism Are you, the daughter of a Panjandrum, a Bolshevik?

THE GRAND DUCHESS I am anything that will make the world less like a prison and more like a circus

STRAMMFEST Ah! You still want to be a circus star

THE GRAND DUCHESS Yes, and be billed as the Bolshevik Empress Nothing shall stop me You have your orders, General Strammfest save the Revolution

STRAMMFEST What Revolution? Which Revolution? No two of your rabble of revolutionists mean the same thing by the Revolution. What can save a mob in which every man is rushing in a different direction?

THE GRAND DUCHESS I will tell you The war can save it.

STRAMMFEST The war?

THE GRAND DUCHESS Yes, the war Only a great common danger and a great common duty can unite us and weld these wrangling factions into a solid commonwealth

STRAMMFEST Bravo! War sets everything right I have always said so But what is a united people without a united army? And what can I do? I am only a soldier I cannot make speeches: I have won no victories they will not rally to my call [*again he sinks into his chair with his former gesture of discouragement*]

THE GRAND DUCHESS Are you sure they will not rally to mine?

STRAMMFEST Oh, if only you were a man and a soldier!

THE GRAND DUCHESS Suppose I find you a man and a soldier?

STRAMMFEST [*rising in a fury*] Ah! the scoundrel you eloped with! You think you will shove this fellow into an army command, over my head Never

THE GRAND DUCHESS You promised everything. You swore anything [*She marches as*

if in front of a regiment] I know that this man alone can rouse the army to enthusiasm

STRAMMFEST Delusion! Folly! He is some circus acrobat, and you are in love with him

THE GRAND DUCHESS I swear I am not in love with him I swear I will never marry him.

STRAMMFEST. Then who is he?

THE GRAND DUCHESS Anybody in the world but you would have guessed long ago He is under your very eyes

STRAMMFEST [*staring past her right and left*] Where?

THE GRAND DUCHESS Look out of the window

He rushes to the window, looking for the officer The Grand Duchess takes off her cloak and appears in the uniform of the Panderobajensky Hussars.

STRAMMFEST [*peering through the window*] Where is he? I can see no one

THE GRAND DUCHESS Here, silly

STRAMMFEST [*turning*] You! Great Heavens! The Bolshevik Empress!

THE END

XXX

BACK TO METHUSELAH

PART I

IN THE BEGINNING

ACT I

The Garden of Eden Afternoon An immense serpent is sleeping with her head buried in a thick bed of Johnswort, and her body coiled in apparently endless rings through the branches of a tree, which is already well grown, for the days of creation have been longer than our reckoning She is not yet visible to anyone unaware of her presence, as her colors of green and brown make a perfect camouflage Near her head a low rock shews above the Johnswort

The rock and tree are on the border of a glade in which lies a dead fawn all awry, its neck being broken Adam, crouching with one hand on the rock, is staring in consternation at the dead body He has not noticed the serpent on his left hand. He turns his face to his right and calls excitedly.

ADAM Eve! Eve!

EVE'S VOICE What is it, Adam?

ADAM Come here Quick Something has happened

EVE [*running in*] What? Where? [*Adam points to the fawn*] Oh! [*She goes to it, and he is emboldened to go with her*] What is the matter with its eyes?

ADAM It is not only its eyes. Look. [*He kicks it*]

EVE Oh dont! Why doesnt it wake?

ADAM. I dont know It is not asleep

EVE Not asleep?

ADAM Try.

EVE [*trying to shake it and roll it over*] It is stiff and cold

ADAM Nothing will wake it

EVE It has a queer smell Pah! [*She dusts her hands, and draws away from it*] Did you find it like that?

ADAM No. It was playing about, and it tripped and went head over heels It never stirred again Its neck is wrong [*he stoops to lift the neck and shew her*].

EVE. Dont touch it. Come away from it

They both retreat, and contemplate it from a few steps' distance with growing repulsion

EVE Adam

ADAM Yes?

EVE. Suppose you were to trip and fall, would you go like that?

ADAM Ugh! [*He shudders and sits down on the rock*]

EVE [*throwing herself on the ground beside him, and grasping his knee*] You must be careful Promise me you will be careful

ADAM What is the good of being careful? We have to live here for ever Think of what for ever means! Sooner or later I shall trip and fall It may be tomorrow, it may be after as many days as there are leaves in the garden and grains of sand by the river No matter some day I shall forget and stumble

EVE I too

ADAM [*horrified*] Oh no, no I should be alone Alone for ever You must never put yourself in danger of stumbling You must not move about. You must sit still I will take care of you and bring you what you want

EVE [*turning away from him with a shrug, and hugging her ankles*] I should soon get tired of that Besides, if it happened to you, I should be alone I could not sit still then And at last it would happen to me too

ADAM And then?

EVE Then we should be no more There would be only the things on all fours, and the birds, and the snakes

ADAM That must not be

EVE. Yes that must not be But it might be

ADAM No I tell you it must not be I know that it must not be

EVE We both know it How do we know it?

ADAM There is a voice in the garden that tells me things

EVE The garden is full of voices sometimes They put all sorts of thoughts into my head

ADAM To me there is only one voice It is very low, but it is so near that it is like a whisper from within myself There is no mistaking it for any voice of the birds or beasts, or for your voice

EVE. It is strange that I should hear voices from all sides and you only one from within But I have some thoughts that come from within me and not from the voices The thought that we must not cease to be comes from within.

ADAM [*despairingly*] But we shall cease to be We shall fall like the fawn and be broken [*Rising and moving about in his agitation*] I cannot bear this knowledge I will not have it. It must not be, I tell you Yet I do not know how to prevent it.

EVE That is just what I feel, but it is very strange that you should say so: there is no pleasing you You change your mind so often

ADAM [*scolding her*] Why do you say that? How have I changed my mind?

EVF You say we must not cease to exist. But you used to complain of having to exist always and for ever You sometimes sit for hours brooding and silent, hating me in your heart. When I ask you what I have done to you, you say you are not thinking of me, but of the horror of having to be here for ever But I know very well that what you mean is the horror of having to be here with me for ever

ADAM Oh! That is what you think, is it? Well, you are wrong [*He sits down again, sulkily*] It is the horror of having to be with myself for ever I like you, but I do not like myself I want to be different, to be better; to begin again and again, to shed myself as a snake sheds its skin I am tired of myself And yet I must endure myself, not for a day or for many days, but for ever That is a dreadful thought That is what makes me sit brooding and silent and hateful. Do you never think of that?

EVE No I do not think about myself what is the use? I am what I am nothing can alter that I think about you

ADAM You should not. You are always spying on me I can never be alone You always want to know what I have been doing It is a burden You should try to have an existence of your own, instead of occupying yourself with my existence

EVE I have to think about you You are lazy you are dirty you neglect yourself you are always dreaming you would eat bad food and become disgusting if I did not watch you and occupy myself with you And now some day, in spite of all my care, you will fall on your head and become dead

ADAM Dead? What word is that?

EVE [*pointing to the fawn*] Like that. I call it dead

ADAM [*rising and approaching it slowly*] There is something uncanny about it

EVE [*joining him*] Oh! It is changing into

little white worms

ADAM Throw it into the river. It is unbearable

EVE I dare not touch it

ADAM. Then I must, though I loathe it It is poisoning the air [*He gathers its hooves in his hand and carries it away in the direction from which Eve came, holding it as far from him as possible*]

Eve looks after them for a moment; then, with a shiver of disgust, sits down on the rock, brooding. The body of the serpent becomes visible, glowing with wonderful new colors. She rears her head slowly from the bed of Johnswort, and speaks into Eve's ear in a strange seductively musical whisper.

THE SERPENT Eve

EVE [*startled*] Who is that?

THE SERPENT It is I I have come to shew you my beautiful new hood See [*she spreads a magnificent amethystine hood*]

EVE [*admiring it*] Oh! But who taught you to speak?

THE SERPENT You and Adam I have crept through the grass, and hidden, and listened to you

EVE That was wonderfully clever of you

THE SERPENT I am the most subtle of all the creatures of the field

EVE Your hood is most lovely [*She strokes it and pets the serpent*] Pretty thing! Do you love your godmother Eve?

THE SERPENT I adore her [*She licks Eve's neck with her double tongue*]

EVE [*petting her*] Eve's wonderful darling snake. Eve will never be lonely now that her snake can talk to her

THE SNAKE I can talk of many things I am very wise It was I who whispered the word to you that you did not know. Dead Death Die

EVE [*shuddering*] Why do you remind me of it? I forgot it when I saw your beautiful hood You must not remind me of unhappy things

THE SERPENT. Death is not an unhappy thing when you have learnt how to conquer it.

EVE How can I conquer it?

THE SERPENT. By another thing, called birth

EVE What? [*Trying to pronounce it*] Birth?

THE SERPENT Yes, birth

EVE What is birth?

THE SERPENT The serpent never dies Some day you shall see me come out of this beautiful skin, a new snake with a new and lovelier skin That is birth

EVE I have seen that It is wonderful

THE SERPENT If I can do that, what can I not do? I tell you I am very subtle When you and Adam talk, I hear you say "Why?" Always "Why?" You see things, and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?" I made the word dead to describe my old skin that I cast when I am renewed I call that renewal being born

EVE Born is a beautiful word

THE SERPENT Why not be born again and again as I am, new and beautiful every time?

EVE I! It does not happen that is why

THE SERPENT That is how, but it is not why Why not?

EVE But I should not like it It would be nice to be new again, but my old skin would lie on the ground looking just like me; and Adam would see it shrivel up and—

THE SERPENT. No He need not. There is a second birth

EVE A second birth?

THE SERPENT Listen I will tell you a great secret I am very subtle, and I have thought and thought and thought. And I am very wilful, and must have what I want, and I have willed and willed and willed And I have eaten strange things stones and apples that you are afraid to eat.

EVE You dared!

THE SERPENT I dared everything And at last I found a way of gathering together a part of the life in my body—

EVE What is the life?

THE SERPENT That which makes the difference between the dead fawn and the live one.

EVE What a beautiful word! And what a wonderful thing! Life is the loveliest of all the new words

THE SERPENT Yes. it was by meditating on Life that I gained the power to do miracles

EVE Miracles? Another new word

THE SERPENT. A miracle is an impossible thing that is nevertheless possible Something that never could happen, and yet does happen

EVE Tell me some miracle that you have done.

THE SERPENT. I gathered a part of the life in my body, and shut it into a tiny white case

made of the stones I had eaten

EVE And what good was that?

THE SERPENT I showed the little ease to the sun, and left it in its warmth And it burst, and a little snake came out, and it became bigger and bigger from day to day until it was as big as I That was the second birth

EVE Oh! That is too wonderful It stirs inside me It hurts

THE SERPENT It nearly tore me asunder Yet I am alive, and can burst my skin and renew myself as before Soon there will be as many snakes in Eden as there are scales on my body Then death will not matter this snake and that snake will die, but the snakes will live

EVE But the rest of us will die sooner or later, like the fawn And then there will be nothing but snakes, snakes, snakes everywhere

THE SERPENT That must not be I worship you, Eve I must have something to worship Something quite different to myself, like you There must be something greater than the snake

EVE Yes it must not be Adam must not perish You are very subtle tell me what to do

THE SERPENT Think Will Eat the dust Lick the white stone bite the apple you dread The sun will give life

EVE I do not trust the sun I will give life myself I will tear another Adam from my body if I tear my body to pieces in the act

THE SERPENT Do Dare it Everything is possible everything Listen I am old I am the old serpent, older than Adam, older than Eve I remembered Lilit, who came before Adam and Eve I was her darling as I am yours She was alone there was no man with her She saw death as you saw it when the fawn fell, and she knew then that she must find out how to renew herself and cast the skin like me She had a mighty will she strove and strove and willed and willed for more moons than there are leaves on all the trees of the garden Her pangs were terrible her groans drove sleep from Eden She said it must never be again that the burden of renewing life was past bearing that it was too much for one And when she cast the skin, lo! there was not one new Lilit but two one like herself, the other like Adam You were the one Adam was the other

EVE But why did she divide into two, and

make us different?

THE SERPENT I tell you the labor is too much for one. Two must share it

FVF Do you mean that Adam must share it with me? He will not He cannot bear pain, nor take trouble with his body

THE SERPENT He need not There will be no pain for him He will implore you to let him do his share He will be in your power through his desire

FVF Then I will do it But how? How did Lilit work this miracle?

THE SERPENT She imagined it

FVF What is imagined?

THE SERPENT She told it to me as a marvellous story of something that never happened to a Lilit that never was She did not know then that imagination is the beginning of creation You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine, and at last you create what you will

FVF How can I create out of nothing?

THE SERPENT Everything must have been created out of nothing Look at that thick roll of hard flesh on your strong arm! That was not always there you could not climb a tree when I first saw you But you willed and tried and willed and tried, and your will created out of nothing the roll on your arm until you had your desire, and could draw yourself up with one hand and seat yourself on the bough that was above your head

EVE That was practice

THE SERPENT Things wear out by practice they do not grow by it Your hair streams in the wind as if it were trying to stretch itself further and further But it does not grow longer for all its practice in streaming, because you have not willed it so When Lilit told me what she had imagined in our silent language (for there were no words then) I bade her desire it and will it, and then, to our great wonder, the thing she had desired and willed created itself in her under the urging of her will Then I too willed to renew myself as two instead of one, and after many days the miracle happened, and I burst from my skin with another snake interlaced with me, and now there are two imaginations, two desires, two wills to create with

EVE To desire, to imagine, to will, to create That is too long a story Find me one word for it all you, who are so clever at words

THE SERPENT In one word, to conceive That is the word that means both the be-

ginning in imagination and the end in creation

EVE Find me a word for the story Lilith imagined and told you in your silent language the story that was too wonderful to be true, and yet came true

THE SERPENT A poem

EVE Find me another word for what Lilith was to me

THE SERPENT She was your mother

EVE And Adam's mother?

THE SERPENT. Yes

EVE [*about to rise*] I will go and tell Adam to conceive

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

EVE [*jarred and startled*] What a hateful noise! What is the matter with you? No one has ever uttered such a sound before

THE SERPENT Adam cannot conceive

EVE Why?

THE SERPENT Lilith did not imagine him so He can imagine. he can will he can desire he can gather his life together for a great spring towards creation he can create all things except one, and that one is his own kind

EVE Why did Lilith keep this from him?

THE SERPENT. Because if he could do that he could do without Eve

EVE That is true It is I who must conceive.

THE SERPENT Yes By that he is tied to you.

EVE And I to him!

THE SERPENT. Yes, until you create another Adam

EVE I had not thought of that You are very subtle But if I create another Eve he may turn to her and do without me I will not create any Eves, only Adams

THE SERPENT They cannot renew themselves without Eves Sooner or later you will die like the fawn; and the new Adams will be unable to create without new Eves You can imagine such an end; but you cannot desire it, therefore cannot will it, therefore cannot create Adams only.

EVE. If I am to die like the fawn, why should not the rest die too? What do I care?

THE SERPENT Life must not cease That comes before everything It is silly to say you do not care You do care It is that care that will prompt your imagination; inflame your desires, make your will irresistible, and create out of nothing.

EVE [*thoughtfully*] There can be no such thing as nothing The garden is full, not

empty.

THE SERPENT I had not thought of that That is a great thought Yes there is no such thing as nothing, only things we cannot see. The chameleon eats the air

EVE I have another thought: I must tell it to Adam [*Calling*] Adam! Adam! Coo-ee!

ADAM'S VOICE Coo-ee!

EVE This will please him, and cure his fits of melancholy

THE SERPENT. Do not tell him yet I have not told you the great secret

EVE What more is there to tell? It is I who have to do the miracle

THE SERPENT No he, too, must desire and will. But he must give his desire and his will to you.

EVE How?

THE SERPENT That is the great secret Hush! he is coming

ADAM [*returning*] Is there another voice in the garden besides our voices and the Voice? I heard a new voice

EVE [*rising and running to him*] Only think, Adam! Our snake has learnt to speak by listening to us

ADAM [*delighted*] Is it so? [*He goes past her to the stone, and fondles the serpent*]

THE SERPENT [*responding affectionately*] It is so, dear Adam

EVE But I have more wonderful news than that. Adam. we need not live for ever.

ADAM [*dropping the snake's head in his excitement*] What! Eve do not play with me about this. If only there may be an end some day, and yet no end! If only I can be relieved of the horror of having to endure myself for ever! If only the care of this terrible garden may pass on to some other gardener! If only the sentinel set by the Voice can be relieved! If only the rest and sleep that enable me to bear it from day to day could grow after many days into an eternal rest, an eternal sleep, then I could face my days, however long they may last Only, there must be some end, some end. I am not strong enough to bear eternity

THE SERPENT. You need not live to see another summer; and yet there shall be no end

ADAM. That cannot be.

THE SERPENT. It can be.

EVE It shall be.

THE SERPENT. It is Kill me; and you will find another snake in the garden tomorrow.

You will find more snakes than there are fingers on your hands

EVE I will make other Adams, other Eves

ADAM I tell you you must not make up stories about this It cannot happen

THE SERPENT I can remember when you were yourself a thing that could not happen Yet you are

ADAM [*struck*] That must be true [*He sits down on the stone*]

THE SERPENT I will tell Eve the secret, and she will tell it to you

ADAM The secret! [*He turns quickly towards the serpent, and in doing so puts his foot on something sharp*] Oh!

EVE What is it?

ADAM [*rubbing his foot*] A thistle And there, next to it, a briar And nettles, too! I am tired of pulling these things up to keep the garden pleasant for us for ever

THE SERPENT They do not grow very fast They will not overrun the whole garden for a long time not until you have laid down your burden and gone to sleep for ever Why should you trouble yourself? Let the new Adams clear a place for themselves

ADAM That is very true You must tell us your secret You see, Eve, what a splendid thing it is not to have to live for ever

EVE [*throwing herself down discontentedly and plucking at the grass*] That is so like a man The moment you find we need not last for ever, you talk as if we were going to end today You must clear away some of those horrid things, or we shall be scratched and stung whenever we forget to look where we are stepping

ADAM Oh yes, some of them, of course But only some I will clear them away tomorrow

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

ADAM That is a funny noise to make I like it

EVE I do not Why do you make it again?

THE SERPENT Adam has invented something new He has invented tomorrow You will invent things every day now that the burden of immortality is lifted from you

EVE Immortality? What is that?

THE SERPENT My new word for having to live for ever

EVE The serpent has made a beautiful word for being Living

ADAM Make me a beautiful word for doing things tomorrow for that surely is a great

and blessed invention

THE SERPENT Procrastination

FIVE That is a sweet word I wish I had a serpent's tongue

THE SERPENT That may come too Everything is possible.

ADAM [*springing up in sudden terror*] Oh!

FIVE What is the matter now?

ADAM My rest! My escape from life!

THE SERPENT Death That is the word

ADAM There is a terrible danger in this procrastination

EVE What danger?

ADAM If I put off death until tomorrow, I shall never die There is no such day as tomorrow, and never can be

THE SERPENT I am very subtle, but Man is deeper in his thought than I am The woman knows that there is no such thing as nothing the man knows that there is no such day as tomorrow I do well to worship them

ADAM If I am to overtake death, I must appoint a real day, not a tomorrow When shall I die?

EVE You may die when I have made another Adam Not before But then, as soon as you like [*She rises, and passing behind him, strolls off carelessly to the tree and leans against it, stroking a ring of the snake*]

ADAM There need be no hurry even then

EVE I see you will put it off until tomorrow

ADAM And you? Will you die the moment you have made a new Eve?

EVE Why should I? Are you eager to be rid of me? Only just now you wanted me to sit still and never move lest I should stumble and die like the fawn Now you no longer care

ADAM It does not matter so much now

EVE [*angrily to the snake*] This death that you have brought into the garden is an evil thing He wants me to die

THE SERPENT [*to Adam*] Do you want her to die?

ADAM No It is I who am to die Eve must not die before me I should be lonely

EVE You could get one of the new Eves

ADAM That is true But they might not be quite the same They could not I feel sure of that They would not have the same memories They would be—I want a word for them

THE SERPENT Strangers

ADAM Yes that is a good hard word Strangers

EVE. When there are new Adams and new Eves we shall live in a garden of strangers We shall need each other [*She comes quickly behind him and turns up his face to her*] Do not forget that, Adam Never forget it

ADAM Why should I forget it? It is I who have thought of it

EVE I, too, have thought of something The fawn stumbled and fell and died But you could come softly up behind me and [*she suddenly pounces on his shoulders and throws him forward on his face*] throw me down so that I should die I should not dare to sleep if there were no reason why you should not make me die

ADAM [*scrambling up in horror*] Make you die!!! What a frightful thought!

THE SERPENT Kill, kill, kill, kill That is the word

EVE The new Adams and Eves might kill us. I shall not make them [*She sits on the rock and pulls him down beside her, clasping him to her with her right arm*]

THE SERPENT You must. For if you do not there will be an end

ADAM No they will not kill us they will as I do There is something against it. Voice in the garden will tell them that you must not kill, as it tells me

THE SERPENT The voice in the garden is your own voice

ADAM It is, and it is not It is something greater than me I am only a part of it

EVE The Voice does not tell me not to kill you Yet I do not want you to die before me. No voice is needed to make me feel that

ADAM [*throwing his arm round her shoulder with an expression of anguish*] Oh no that is plain without any voice. There could be that holds us together, some one consumed by no word— made an all

THE SERPENT Love Love Love, grams, n

ADAM That is too short a word for something that happened

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

EVE [*turning impatiently to the snake*] That heart-biting sound again! Do not do it Why do you do it?

THE SERPENT. Love may be too long a word for so short a thing soon But when it is short it will be very sweet

ADAM [*ruminating*] You puzzle me My old trouble was heavy, but it was simple These wonders that you promise to do may tangle up my being before they bring me the gift

of death I was troubled with the burden of eternal being, but I was not confused in my mind If I did not know that I loved Eve, at least I did not know that she might cease to love me, and come to love some other Adam and desire my death. Can you find a name for that knowledge?

THE SERPENT Jealousy Jealousy. Jealousy

ADAM A hideous word

EVE [*shaking him*] Adam you must not brood You think too much

ADAM [*angrily*] How can I help brooding when the future has become uncertain? Anything is better than uncertainty. Life has become uncertain Love is uncertain Have you a word for this new misery?

THE SERPENT Fear Fear Fear

ADAM Have you a remedy for it?

THE SERPENT Yes Hope Hope Hope

ADAM What is hope?

THE SERPENT. As long as you do not know the future you do not know that it will not be happier than the past That is hope

ADAM It does not console me Fear is stronger in me than hope I must have certainty [*He rises threateningly*] Give it to me, or I will kill you when next I catch you asleep

EVE [*throwing her arms round the serpent*] My beautiful snake Oh no How can you even think such a horror?

ADAM Fear will drive me to anything The serpent gave me fear Let it now give me certainty or go in fear of me

THE SERPENT. Bind the future by your will Make a vow

ADAM What is a vow?

THE SERPENT Choose a day for your death; and resolve to die on that day. Then death is no longer uncertain but certain Let Eve vow to love you until your death Then love will be no longer uncertain

ADAM Yes that is splendid. that will bind the future

EVE [*displeased, turning away from the serpent*] But it will destroy hope.

ADAM [*angrily*] Be silent, woman Hope is wicked Happiness is wicked Certainty is blessed

THE SERPENT What is wicked? You have invented a word

ADAM Whatever I fear to do is wicked Listen to me, Eve; and you, snake, listen too, that your memory may hold my vow. I will live a thousand sets of the four seasons—

You will find more snakes than there are fingers on your hands

EVE I will make other Adams, other Eves.

ADAM I tell you you must not make up stories about this It cannot happen

THE SERPENT I can remember when you were yourself a thing that could not happen Yet you are

ADAM [*struck*] That must be true [*He sits down on the stone*]

THE SERPENT I will tell Eve the secret, and she will tell it to you

ADAM The secret! [*He turns quickly towards the serpent, and in doing so puts his foot on something sharp*] Oh!

EVE What is it?

ADAM [*rubbing his foot*] A thistle And there, next to it, a briar And nettles, too! I am tired of pulling these things up to keep the garden pleasant for us for ever

THE SERPENT They do not grow very fast They will not overrun the whole garden for a long time not until you have laid down your burden and gone to sleep for ever Why should you trouble yourself? Let the new Adams clear a place for themselves

ADAM That is very true You must tell us your secret You see, Eve, what a splendid thing it is not to have to live for ever

EVE [*throwing herself down discontentedly and plucking at the grass*] That is so like a man The moment you find we need not last for ever, you talk as if we were going to end today You must clear away some of those horrid things, or we shall be scratched and stung whenever we forget to look where we are stepping

ADAM Oh yes, some of them, of course But only some I will clear them away tomorrow

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

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THE SERPENT That may come too Everything is possible.

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EVE What is the matter now?

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ADAM There is a terrible danger in this procrastination

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ADAM And you? Will you die the moment you have made a new Eve?

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EVE I, too, have thought of something The fawn stumbled and fell and died But you could come softly up behind me and [*she suddenly pounces on his shoulders and throws him forward on his face*] throw me down so that I should die I should not dare to sleep if there were no reason why you should not make me die

ADAM [*scrambling up in horror*] Make you die!!! What a frightful thought!

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ADAM [*throwing his arm round her shoulder with an expression of anguish*] Oh no that is plain without any voice. There is something that holds us together, some one, made of no word—

THE SERPENT Love Love Love my grand happiness

ADAM That is too short a word for something

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

EVE [*turning impatiently to the snake*] That heart-biting sound again! Do not do it Why do you do it?

THE SERPENT Love may be too long a word for so short a thing soon But when it is short it will be very sweet

ADAM [*ruminating*] You puzzle me My old trouble was heavy, but it was simple These wonders that you promise to do make my tangle up my being before they bring me the gift

of death I was troubled with the burden of eternal being; but I was not confused in my mind If I did not know that I loved Eve, at least I did not know that she might cease to love me, and come to love some other Adam and desire my death. Can you find a name for that knowledge?

THE SERPENT Jealousy. Jealousy Jealousy

ADAM A hideous word

EVE [*shaking him*] Adam you must not brood You think too much

ADAM [*angrily*] How can I help brooding when the future has become uncertain? Anything is better than uncertainty Life has become uncertain Love is uncertain Have you a word for this new misery?

THE SERPENT Fear. Fear Fear

ADAM Have you a remedy for it?

THE SERPENT Yes Hope Hope Hope

ADAM What is hope?

THE SERPENT As long as you do not know the future you do not know that it will not be happier than the past That is hope

ADAM It does not console me. Fear is stronger in me than hope I must have certainty [*He rises threateningly*] Give it to me, or I will kill you when next I catch you asleep

EVE [*throwing her arms round the serpent*] My beautiful snake Oh no How can you even think such a horror?

ADAM Fear will drive me to anything The serpent gave me fear Let it now give me certainty or go in fear of me

THE SERPENT Bind the future by your will Make a vow.

ADAM What is a vow?

THE SERPENT Choose a day for your death; and resolve to die on that day Then death is no longer uncertain but certain Let Eve vow to love you until your death Then love will be no longer uncertain

ADAM Yes that is splendid that will bind the future

EVE [*displeased, turning away from the serpent*] But it will destroy hope.

ADAM [*angrily*] Be silent, woman. Hope is wicked Happiness is wicked. Certainty is blessed.

THE SERPENT What is wicked? You have invented a word

ADAM Whatever I fear to do is wicked. Listen to me, Eve; and you, snake, listen too. that your memory may hold my vow. I will live a thousand sets of the four seasons—

THE SERPENT Years. Years

ADAM I will live a thousand years; and then I will endure no more I will die and take my rest. And I will love Eve all that time and no other woman

EVE And if Adam keeps his vow I will love no other man until he dies

THE SERPENT You have both invented marriage And what he will be to you and not to any other woman is husband, and what you will be to him and not to any other man is wife

ADAM [*instinctively moving his hand towards her*] Husband and wife

EVE [*slipping her hand into his*] Wife and husband

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

EVE [*snatching herself loose from Adam*] Do not make that odious noise, I tell you

ADAM Do not listen to her the noise is good it lightens my heart You are a jolly snake But you have not made a vow yet What vow do you make?

THE SERPENT I make no vows I take my chance

ADAM Chance? What does that mean?

THE SERPENT It means that I fear certainty as you fear uncertainty It means that nothing is certain but uncertainty If I bind the future I bind my will If I bind my will I strangle creation

EVE Creation must not be strangled I tell you I will create, though I tear myself to pieces in the act

ADAM Be silent, both of you I will bind the future I will be delivered from fear [*To Eve*] We have made our vows, and if you must create, you shall create within the bounds of those vows You shall not listen to that snake any more Come [*he seizes her by the hair to drag her away*]

EVE Let me go, you fool It has not yet told me the secret

ADAM [*releasing her*] That is true What is a fool?

EVE I do not know the word came to me It is what you are when you forget and brood and are filled with fear Let us listen to the snake

ADAM No I am afraid of it. I feel as if the ground were giving way under my feet when it speaks Do you stay and listen to it

THE SERPENT [*laughs*]!!!

ADAM [*brightening*] That noise takes away fear Funny The snake and the woman are

going to whisper secrets. [*He chuckles and goes away slowly, laughing his first laugh*]

EVE Now the secret The secret. [*She sits on the rock and throws her arms round the serpent, who begins whispering to her*]

Eve's face lights up with intense interest, which increases until an expression of overwhelming repugnance takes its place She buries her face in her hands

ACT II

A few centuries later Morning An oasis in Mesopotamia Close at hand the end of a log house abuts on a kitchen garden Adam is digging in the middle of the garden On his right, Eve sits on a stool in the shadow of a tree by the doorway, spinning flax Her wheel, which she turns by hand, is a large disc of heavy wood, practically a fly-wheel At the opposite side of the garden is a thorn brake with a passage through it barred by a hurdle

The two are scantily and carelessly dressed in rough linen and leaves They have lost their youth and grace, and Adam has an unkempt beard and jaggedly cut hair, but they are strong and in the prime of life Adam looks worried, like a farmer Eve, better humored (having given up worrying), sits and spins and thinks

A MAN'S VOICE. Hallo, mother!

EVE [*looking across the garden towards the hurdle*] Here is Cain

ADAM [*uttering a grunt of disgust*]!!! [*He goes on digging without raising his head*]

Cain kicks the hurdle out of his way, and strides into the garden In pose, voice, and dress he is insistently warlike He is equipped with a huge, rear and broad brass-bound leather shield, his ~~It is a~~ tiger's head with bull's horns, he wears [*angrily*] a cloak with gold brooch over a lion's head have brought the claws dangling, his feet are ~~ing~~ He wears brass ornaments, his shins are ~~THESE~~ g. eaves, and his bristling military moustache glistens with oil To his parents he has the self assertive, not-quite-at-ease manner of a revolted son who knows that he is not forgiven nor approved of

CAIN [*to Adam*] Still digging? Always dig dig, dig Sticking in the old furrow No progress! no advanced ideas! no adventures! What should I be if I had stuck to the digging you taught me?

ADAM What are you now, with your shield and spear, and your brother's blood crying from the ground against you?

CAIN. I am the first murderer: you are only the first man. Anybody could be the first man: it is as easy as to be the first cabbage. To be the first murderer one must be a man of spirit.

ADAM. Begone. Leave us in peace. The world is wide enough to keep us apart.

EVE. Why do you want to drive him away? He is mine. I made him out of my own body. I want to see my work sometimes.

ADAM. You made Abel also. He killed Abel. Can you bear to look at him after that?

CAIN. Whose fault was it that I killed Abel? Who invented killing? Did I? No: he invented it himself. I followed your teaching. I dug and dug and dug. I cleared away the thistles and briars. I ate the fruits of the earth. I lived in the sweat of my brow, as you do. I was a fool. But Abel was a discoverer, a man of ideas, of spirit: a true Progressive. He was the discoverer of blood. He was the inventor of killing. He found out that the fire of the sun could be brought down by a dewdrop. He invented the altar to keep the fire alive. He changed the beasts he killed into meat by the fire on the altar. He kept himself alive by eating meat. His meal cost him a day's glorious health-giving sport and an hour's amusing play with the fire. You learnt nothing from him: you drudged and drudged and drudged, and dug and dug and dug, and made me do the same. I envied his happiness, his freedom. I despised myself for not doing as he did instead of what you did. He became so happy that he shared his meal with the Voice that had whispered all his inventions to him. He said that the Voice was the voice of the fire that cooked his food, and that the fire that could cook could also eat. It was true. I saw the fire consume the food on his altar. Then I, too, made an altar, and offered my food on it, my grains, my roots, my fruit. Useless. nothing happened. He laughed at me; and then came my great idea: why not kill him as he killed the beasts? I struck, and he died, just as they did. Then I gave up your old silly drudging ways, and lived as he had lived, by the chase, by the killing, and by the fire. Am I not better than you? stronger, happier, freer?

ADAM. You are not stronger. you are shorter in the wind: you cannot endure. You have made the beasts afraid of us; and the snake has invented poison to protect herself against you. I fear you myself. If you take a

step towards your mother with that spear of yours I will strike you with my spade as you struck Abel.

EVE. He will not strike me. He loves me.

ADAM. He loved his brother. But he killed him.

CAIN. I do not want to kill women. I do not want to kill my mother. And for her sake I will not kill you, though I could send this spear through you without coming within reach of your spade. But for her, I could not resist the sport of trying to kill you, in spite of my fear that you would kill me. I have striven with a boar and with a lion as to which of us should kill the other. I have striven with a man. spear to spear and shield to shield. It is terrible, but there is no joy like it. I call it fighting. He who has never fought has never lived. That is what has brought me to my mother today.

ADAM. What have you to do with one another now? She is the creator, you the destroyer.

CAIN. How can I destroy unless she creates? I want her to create more and more men, aye, and more and more women, that they may in turn create more men. I have imagined a glorious poem of many men, of more men than there are leaves on a thousand trees. I will divide them into two great hosts. One of them I will lead; and the other will be led by the man I fear most and desire to fight and kill most. And each host shall try to kill the other host. Think of that! all those multitudes of men fighting, fighting, killing, killing! The four rivers running with blood! The shouts of triumph! the howls of rage! the curses of despair! the shrieks of torment! That will be life indeed: life lived to the very marrow, burning, overwhelming life. Every man who has not seen it, heard it, felt it, risked it, will feel a humbled fool in the presence of the man who has.

EVE. And I! I am to be a mere convenience to make men for you to kill!

ADAM. Or to kill you, you fool!

CAIN. Mother, the making of men is your right, your risk, your agony, your glory, your triumph. You make my father here your mere convenience, as you call it, for that. He has to dig for you, sweat for you, plod for you, like the ox who helps him to tear up the ground or the ass who carries his burdens for him. No woman shall make me live my father's life. I will hunt. I will fight and strive

to the very bursting of my sinews When I have slain the boar at the risk of my life, I will throw it to my woman to cook, and give her a morsel of it for her pains She shall have no other food, and that will make her my slave And the man that slays me shall have her for his booty Man shall be the master of Woman, not her baby and her drudge

Adam throws down his spade, and stands looking darkly at Eve

EVE Are you tempted, Adam? Does this seem a better thing to you than love between us?

CAIN What does he know of love? Only when he has fought, when he has faced terror and death, when he has striven to the spending of the last rally of his strength, can he know what it is to rest in love in the arms of a woman Ask that woman whom you made, who is also my wife, whether she would have me as I was in the days when I followed the ways of Adam, and was a digger and a drudge?

EVE [*angrily throwing down her distaff*] What! You dare come here boasting about that good-for-nothing Lua, the worst of daughters and the worst of wives! You her master! You are more her slave than Adam's ox or your own sheep-dog Forsooth, when you have slain the boar at the risk of your life, you will throw her a morsel of it for her pains! Ha! Poor wretch do you think I do not know her, and know you, better than that? Do you risk your life when you trap the ermine and the sable and the blue fox to hang on her lazy shoulders and make her look more like an animal than a woman? When you have to snare the little tender birds because it is too much trouble for her to chew honest food, how much of a great warrior do you feel then? You slay the tiger at the risk of your life, but who gets the striped skin you have run that risk for? She takes it to lie on, and flings you the carrion flesh you cannot eat You fight because you think that your fighting makes her admire and desire you Fool she makes you fight because you bring her the ornaments and the treasures of those you have slain, and because she is courted and propitiated with power and gold by the people who fear you You say that I make a mere convenience of Adam I who spin and keep the house, and bear and rear children, and am a woman and not a pet animal to please

men and prey on them! What are you, you poor slave of a painted face and a bundle of skunk's fur? You were a man-child when I bore you Lua was a woman-child when I bore her What have you made of yourselves?

CAIN [*letting his spear fall into the crook of his shield arm, and twirling his moustache*] There is something higher than man There is hero and superman

EVE Superman! You are no superman, you are Anti-Man you are to other men what the stoat is to the rabbit; and she is to you what the leech is to the stoat. You despise your father, but when he dies the world will be the richer because he lived When you die, men will say, "He was a great warrior, but it would have been better for the world if he had never been born" And of Lua they will say nothing, but when they think of her they will spit.

CAIN She is a better sort of woman to live with than you If Lua nagged at me as you are nagging, and as you nag at Adam, I would beat her black and blue from head to foot I have done it too, slave as you say I am

EVE. Yes, because she looked at another man And then you grovelled at her feet, and cried, and begged her to forgive you, and were ten times more her slave than ever; and she, when she had finished screaming and the pain went off a little, she forgave you, did she not?

CAIN She loved me more than ever That is the true nature of woman

EVE [*now pitying him maternally*] Love! You call that love! You call that the nature of woman! My boy this is neither man nor woman nor love nor life You have no real strength in your bones nor sap in your flesh

CAIN Ha! [*he seizes his spear and smings it muscularly*]

EVE Yes you have to twirl a stick to feel your strength you cannot taste life without making it bitter and boiling hot you cannot love Lua until her face is painted, nor feel the natural warmth of her flesh until you have stuck a squirrel's fur on it You can feel nothing but a torment, and believe nothing but a lie You will not raise your head to look at all the miracles of life that surround you, but you will run ten miles to see a fight or a death

ADAM Enough said Let the boy alone

CAIN Boy! Ha! ha!

EVE [to Adam] You think, perhaps, that his way of life may be better than yours after all. You are still tempted. Well, will you pamper me as he pampers his woman? Will you kill tigers and bears until I have a heap of their skins to lounge on? Shall I paint my face and let my arms waste into pretty softness, and eat partridges and doves, and the flesh of kids whose milk you will steal for me?

ADAM You are hard enough to bear with as you are. Stay as you are, and I will stay as I am.

CAIN You neither of you know anything about life. You are simple country folk. You are the nurses and valets of the oxen and dogs and asses you have tamed to work for you. I can raise you out of that. I have a plan. Why not tame men and women to work for us? Why not bring them up from childhood never to know any other lot, so that they may believe that we are gods, and that they are here only to make life glorious for us?

ADAM [impressed] That is a great thought, certainly.

EVE [contemptuously] Great thought!

ADAM Well, as the serpent used to say, why not?

EVE Because I would not have such wretches in my house. Because I hate creatures with two heads, or with withered limbs, or that are distorted and perverted and unnatural. I have told Cain already that he is not a man and that Lua is not a woman. They are monsters. And now you want to make still more unnatural monsters, so that you may be utterly lazy and worthless, and that your tamed human animals may find work a blasting curse. A fine dream, truly! [To Cain] Your father is a fool skin deep, but you are a fool to your very marrow, and your baggage of a wife is worse.

ADAM Why am I a fool? How am I a greater fool than you?

EVE You said there would be no killing because the Voice would tell our children that they must not kill. Why did it not tell Cain that?

CAIN It did, but I am not a child to be afraid of a Voice. The Voice thought I was nothing but my brother's keeper. It found that I was myself, and that it was for Abel to be himself also, and look to himself. He was not my keeper any more than I was his. Why did he not kill me? There was no more to prevent him than there was to prevent

me. It was man to man, and I won. I was the first conqueror.

ADAM What did the Voice say to you when you thought all that?

CAIN Why, it gave me right. It said that my deed was as a mark on me, a burnt-in mark such as Abel put on his sheep, that no man should slay me. And here I stand unslain, whilst the cowards who have never slain, the men who are content to be their brothers' keepers instead of their masters, are despised and rejected, and slain like rabbits. He who bears the brand of Cain shall rule the earth. When he falls, he shall be avenged sevenfold. The Voice has said it; so beware how you plot against me, you and all the rest.

ADAM Cease your boasting and bullying, and tell the truth. Does not the Voice tell you that as no man dare slay you for murdering your brother, you ought to slay yourself?

CAIN No.

ADAM Then there is no such thing as divine justice, unless you are lying.

CAIN I am not lying. I dare all truths. There is divine justice. For the Voice tells me that I must offer myself to every man to be killed if he can kill me. Without danger I cannot be great. That is how I pay for Abel's blood. Danger and fear follow my steps everywhere. Without them courage would have no sense. And it is courage, courage, courage, that raises the blood of life to crimson splendor.

ADAM [picking up his spade and preparing to dig again] Take yourself off then. This splendid life of yours does not last for a thousand years, and I must last for a thousand years. When you fighters do not get killed in fighting one another or fighting the beasts, you die from mere evil in yourselves. Your flesh ceases to grow like man's flesh. It grows like a fungus on a tree. Instead of breathing, you sneeze, or cough up your insides, and wither and perish. Your bowels become rotten, your hair falls from you, your teeth blacken and drop out; and you die before your time, not because you will, but because you must. I will dig, and live.

CAIN And pray, what use is this thousand years of life to you, you old vegetable? Do you dig any better because you have been digging for hundreds of years? I have not lived as long as you, but I know all there is to be known of the craft of digging. By quit-

ting it I have set myself free to learn nobler crafts of which you know nothing I know the craft of fighting and of hunting in a word, the craft of killing. What certainty have you of your thousand years? I could kill both of you, and you could no more defend yourselves than a couple of sheep I spare you, but others may kill you Why not live bravely, and die early and make room for others? Why, I—I! that know many more crafts than either of you, am tired of myself when I am not fighting or hunting Sooner than face a thousand years of it I should kill myself, as the Voice sometimes tempts me to do already

ADAM Liar you denied just now that it called on you to pay for Abel's life with your own

CAIN The Voice does not speak to me as it does to you I am a man you are only a grown-up child One does not speak to a child as to a man And a man does not listen and tremble in silence He replies he makes the Voice respect him in the end he dictates what the Voice shall say

ADAM May your tongue be accurst for such blasphemy!

EVE Keep a guard on your own tongue, and do not curse my son It was Lilit who did wrong when she shared the labor of creation so unequally between man and wife If you, Cain, had had the trouble of making Abel, or had had to make another man to replace him when he was gone, you would not have killed him you would have risked your own life to save his That is why all this empty talk of yours, which tempted Adam just now when he threw down his spade and listened to you for a while, went by me like foul wind that has passed over a dead body That is why there is enmity between Woman the creator and Man the destroyer I know you I am your mother You are idle you are selfish It is long and hard and painful to create life it is short and easy to steal the life others have made When you dug, you made the earth live and bring forth as I live and bring forth It was for that that Lilit set you free from the travail of women, not for theft and murder

CAIN The Devil thank her for it! I can make better use of my time than to play the husband to the clay beneath my feet.

ADAM Devil? What new word is that?

CAIN Hearken to me, old fool I have never in my soul listened willingly when you have

told me of the Voice that whispers to you There must be two Voices, one that gulls and despises you, and another that trusts and respects me I call yours the Devil Mine I call the Voice of God

ADAM Mine is the Voice of Life yours the Voice of Death

CAIN Be it so For it whispers to me that death is not really death that it is the gate of another life a life infinitely splendid and intense a life of the soul alone a life without clods or spades, hunger or fatigue—

EVE Selfish and idle, Cain I know

CAIN Selfish, yes a life in which no man is his brother's keeper, because his brother can keep himself But am I idle? In rejecting your drudgery, have I not embraced evils and agonies of which you know nothing? The arrow is lighter in the hand than the spade, but the energy that drives it through the breast of a fighter is as fire to water compared with the strength that drives the spade into the harmless dirty clay. My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure.

ADAM What is that word? What is pure?

CAIN Turned from the clay Turned upward to the sun, to the clear clean heavens

ADAM The heavens are empty, child The earth is fruitful The earth feeds us It gives us the strength by which we made you and all mankind Cut off from the clay which you despise, you would perish miserably

CAIN I revolt against the clay I revolt against the food You say it gives us strength does it not also turn into filth and smite us with diseases? I revolt against these births that you and mother are so proud of They drag us down to the level of the beasts If that is to be the last thing as it has been the first, let mankind perish If I am to eat like a bear, if Lua is to bring forth cubs like a bear, then I had rather be a bear than a man, for the bear is not ashamed he knows no better If you are content, like the bear, I am not Stay with the woman who gives you children I will go to the woman who gives me dreams Grope in the ground for your food I will bring it from the skies with my arrows, or strike it down as it roams the earth in the pride of its life If I must have food or die, I will at least have it at as far a remove from the earth as I can The ox shall make it something nobler than grass before it comes to me And as the man is nobler than the ox,

I shall some day let my enemy eat the ox; and then I will slay and eat him

ADAM Monster! You hear this, Eve?

EVE So that is what comes of turning your face to the clean clear heavens! Man-eating! Child-eating! For that is what it would come to, just as it came to lambs and kids when Abel began with sheep and goats. You are a poor silly creature after all. Do you think I never have these thoughts. I! who have the labor of the child-bearing. I! who have the drudgery of preparing the food? I thought for a moment that perhaps this strong brave son of mine, who could imagine something better, and could desire what he imagined, might also be able to will what he desired until he created it. And all that comes of it is that he wants to be a bear and eat children. Even a bear would not eat a man if it could get honey instead.

CAIN. I do not want to be a bear. I do not want to eat children. I do not know what I want, except that I want to be something higher and nobler than this stupid old digger whom Lilit made to help you to bring me into the world, and whom you despise now that he has served your turn.

ADAM [*in sullen rage*] I have half a mind to shew you that my spade can split your undutiful head open, in spite of your spear.

CAIN Undutiful! Ha! ha! [*Flourishing his spear*] Try it, old everybody's father. Try a taste of fighting.

EVE Peace, peace, you two fools. Sit down and be quiet; and listen to me [*Adam, with a weary shrug, throws down his spade. Cain, with a laughing one, throws down his shield and spear. Both sit on the ground*]. I hardly know which of you satisfies me least, you with your dirty digging, or he with his dirty killing. I cannot think it was for either of these cheap ways of life that Lilit set you free [*To Adam*]. You dig roots and coax grains out of the earth. why do you not draw down a divine sustenance from the skies? He steals and kills for his food, and makes up idle poems of life after death, and dresses up his terror-ridden life with fine words and his disease-ridden body with fine clothes, so that men may glorify and honor him instead of cursing him as murderer and thief. All you men, except only Adam, are my sons, or my sons' sons, or my sons' sons' sons. you all come to see me. you all shew off before me. all your little wisdoms and accomplishments are

trotted out before mother Eve. The diggers come. the fighters and killers come. they are both very dull, for they either complain to me of the last harvest, or boast to me of the last fight, and one harvest is just like another, and the last fight only a repetition of the first. Oh, I have heard it all a thousand times. They tell me too of their last-born. the clever thing the darling child said yesterday, and how much more wonderful or witty or quaint it is than any child that ever was born before. And I have to pretend to be surprised, delighted, interested; though the last child is like the first, and has said and done nothing that did not delight Adam and me when you and Abel said it. For you were the first children in the world, and filled us with such wonder and delight as no couple can ever again feel while the world lasts. When I can bear no more, I go to our old garden, that is now a mass of nettles and thistles, in the hope of finding the serpent to talk to. But you have made the serpent our enemy. she has left the garden, or is dead. I never see her now. So I have to come back and listen to Adam saying the same thing for the tenthousandth time, or to receive a visit from the last great-great-grandson who has grown up and wants to impress me with his importance. Oh, it is dreary, dreary! And there is yet nearly seven hundred years of it to endure.

CAIN Poor mother! You see, life is too long. One tires of everything. There is nothing new under the sun.

ADAM [*to Eve, grumpily*] Why do you live on, if you can find nothing better to do than complain?

EVE Because there is still hope.

CAIN Of what?

EVE Of the coming true of your dreams and mine. Of newly created things. Of better things. My sons and my sons' sons are not all diggers and fighters. Some of them will neither dig nor fight. they are more useless than either of you. they are weaklings and cowards. they are vain; yet they are dirty and will not take the trouble to cut their hair. They borrow and never pay; but one gives them what they want, because they tell beautiful lies in beautiful words. They can remember their dreams. They can dream without sleeping. They have not will enough to create instead of dreaming; but the serpent said that every dream could be willed.

into creation by those strong enough to believe in it. There are others who cut reeds of different lengths and blow through them, making lovely patterns of sound in the air, and some of them can weave the patterns together, sounding three reeds at the same time, and raising my soul to things for which I have no words. And others make little mammoths out of clay, or make faces appear on flat stones, and ask me to create women for them with such faces. I have watched those faces and willed, and then I have made a woman-child that has grown up quite like them. And others think of numbers without having to count on their fingers, and watch the sky at night, and give names to the stars, and can foretell when the sun will be covered with a black saucepan lid. And there is Tubal, who made this wheel for me which has saved me so much labor. And there is Enoch, who walks on the hills, and hears the Voice continually, and has given up his will to do the will of the Voice, and has some of the Voice's greatness. When they come, there is always some new wonder, or some new hope something to live for. They never want to die, because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them. And then you, Cain, come to me with your stupid fighting and destroying, and your foolish boasting, and you want me to tell you that it is all splendid, and that you are heroic, and that nothing but death or the dread of death makes life worth living. Away with you, naughty child, and do you, Adam, go on with your work and not waste your time listening to him.

CAIN I am not, perhaps, very clever, but—

EVE *[interrupting him]* Perhaps not, but do not begin to boast of that. It is no credit to you.

CAIN For all that, mother, I have an instinct which tells me that death plays its part in life. Tell me this: who invented death?

Adam springs to his feet. Eve drops her distaff. Both show the greatest consternation.

CAIN What is the matter with you both?

ADAM Boy, you have asked us a terrible question.

EVE You invented murder. Let that be enough for you.

CAIN Murder is not death. You know what I mean. Those whom I slay would die if I spared them. If I am not slain, yet I shall

die. Who put this upon me? I say, who invented death?

ADAM Be reasonable, boy. Could you bear to live for ever? You think you could, because you know that you will never have to make your thought good. But I have known what it is to sit and brood under the terror of eternity, of immortality. Think of it, man, to have no escape! to be Adam, Adam, Adam through more days than there are grains of sand by the two rivers, and then be as far from the end as ever! I, who have so much in me that I hate and long to cast off! Be thankful to your parents, who enabled you to hand on your burden to new and better men, and won for you an eternal rest, for it was we who invented death.

CAIN *[rising]* You did well, I, too, do not want to live for ever. But if you invented death, why do you blame me, who am a minister of death?

ADAM I do not blame you. Go in peace. Leave me to my digging, and your mother to her spinning.

CAIN Well, I will leave you to it, though I have shewn you a better way. *[He picks up his shield and spear]* I will go back to my brave warrior friends and their splendid women. *[He strides to the thorn brake]* When Adam delved and Eve span, where was then the gentleman? *[He goes away roaring with laughter, which ceases as he cries from the distance]* Goodbye, mother.

ADAM *[grumbling]* He might have put the hurdle back, lazy hound! *[He replaces the hurdle across the passage]*

EVE Through him and his like, death is gaining on life. Already most of our grandchildren die before they have sense enough to know how to live.

ADAM No matter. *[He spits on his hands, and takes up the spade again]* Life is still long enough to learn to dig, short as they are making it.

EVE *[musing]* Yes, to dig. And to fight. But is it long enough for the other things, the great things? Will they live long enough to eat manna?

ADAM. What is manna?

EVE. Food drawn down from heaven, made out of the air, not dug dirtily from the earth. Will they learn all the ways of all the stars in their little time? It took Enoch two hundred years to learn to interpret the will of the Voice. When he was a mere child of

eighty, his babyish attempts to understand the Voice were more dangerous than the wrath of Cain. If they shorten their lives, they will dig and fight and kill and die, and their baby Enochs will tell them that it is the will of the Voice that they should dig and fight and kill and die for ever.

ADAM. If they are lazy and have a will towards death I cannot help it. I will live my thousand years if they will not, let them die and be damned.

EVE. Damned? What is that?

ADAM. The state of them that love death more than life. Go on with your spinning, and do not sit there idle while I am straining my muscles for you.

EVE [*slowly taking up her distaff*]. If you were not a fool you would find something better for both of us to live by than this spinning and digging.

ADAM. Go on with your work, I tell you; or you shall go without bread.

EVE. Man need not always live by bread alone. There is something else. We do not yet know what it is, but some day we shall find out; and then we will live on that alone, and there shall be no more digging nor spinning, nor fighting nor killing.

She spins resignedly, he digs impatiently.

PART II

THE GOSPEL OF THE BROTHERS BARNABAS

In the first years after the war an impressive-looking gentleman of 50 is seated writing in a well-furnished spacious study. He is dressed in black. His coat is a frock-coat, his tie is white; and his waistcoat, though it is not quite a clergyman's waistcoat, and his collar, though its buttons in front instead of behind, combine with the prosperity indicated by his surroundings, and his air of personal distinction, to suggest the clerical dignitary. Still, he is clearly neither dean nor bishop, he is rather too starily intellectual for a popular Free Church enthusiast, and he is not careworn enough to be a great headmaster.

The study windows, which have broad comfortable window seats, overlook Hampstead Heath towards London. Consequently, it being a fine afternoon in spring, the room is sunny. As you face these windows, you have on your right the fireplace, with a few logs smouldering in it,

and a couple of comfortable library chairs on the hearthrug, beyond it and beside it the door, before you the writing-table, at which the clerical gentleman sits a little to your left facing the door with his right profile presented to you, on your left a settee, and on your right a couple of Chippendale chairs. There is also an upholstered square stool in the middle of the room, against the writing-table. The walls are covered with bookshelves above and lockers beneath.

The door opens; and another gentleman, shorter than the clerical one, within a year or two of the same age, dressed in a well-worn tweed lounge suit, with a short beard and much less style in his bearing and carriage, looks in.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN [*familiar and by no means cordial*]. Hallo! I didn't expect you until the five o'clock train.

THE TWEEDED GENTLEMAN [*coming in very slowly*]. I have something on my mind. I thought I'd come early.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN [*throwing down his pen*]. What is on your mind?

THE TWEEDED GENTLEMAN [*sitting down on the stool, heavily preoccupied with his thought*]. I have made up my mind at last about the time. I make it three hundred years.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN [*sitting up energetically*]. Now that is extraordinary. Most extraordinary. The very last words I wrote when you interrupted me were "at least three centuries." [*He snatches up his manuscript, and points to it*]. Here it is [*reading*]. "the term of human life must be extended to at least three centuries."

THE TWEEDED GENTLEMAN. How did you arrive at it?

A parlor maid opens the door, ushering in a young clergyman.

THE PARLOR MAID. Mr Haslam [*She withdraws*].

The visitor is so very unwelcome that his host forgets to rise; and the two brothers stare at the intruder, quite unable to conceal their dismay. Haslam, who has nothing clerical about him except his collar, and wears a snuff-colored suit, smiles with a frank schoolboyishness that makes it impossible to be unkind to him, and explodes into obviously unpremeditated speech.

HASLAM. I'm afraid I'm an awful nuisance. I'm the rector, and I suppose one ought to call on people.

THE TWEEDED GENTLEMAN [*in ghostly tones*]. We're not Church people, you know.

HASLAM. Oh, I don't mind that, if you don't.

The Church people here are mostly as dull as ditch-water. I have heard such a lot about you, and there are so jolly few people to talk to. I thought you perhaps wouldn't mind. Do you mind? for of course I'll go like a shot if I'm in the way.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN [*rising, disarmed*] Sit down, Mr — er?

HASLAM Haslam.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN Mr Haslam.

THE TWIFEDD GENTLEMAN [*rising and offering him the stool*] Sit down. [*He retreats towards the Chippendale chair*]

HASLAM [*sitting down on the stool*] Thanks awfully.

THE CLERICAL GENTLEMAN [*resuming his seat*] This is my brother Conrad, Professor of Biology at Jarrowfields University. Dr Conrad Barnabas. My name is Franklyn. Franklyn Barnabas. I was in the Church myself for some years.

HASLAM [*sympathizing*] Yes, one can't help it. If there's a living in the family, or one's Governor knows a patron, one gets shoved into the Church by one's parents.

CONRAD [*sitting down on the furthest Chippendale with a snort of amusement*] M'p!

FRANKLYN One gets shoved out of it, sometimes, by one's conscience.

HASLAM Oh yes, but where is a chap like me to go? I'm afraid I'm not intellectual enough to split straws when there's a job in front of me and nothing better for me to do. I daresay the Church was a bit thick for you, but it's good enough for me. It will last my time, anyhow. [*He laughs good-humoredly*]

FRANKLYN [*with renewed energy*] There again! You see, Con. It was his time. Life is too short for men to take it seriously.

HASLAM That's a way of looking at certainly.

FRANKLYN. I was not shoved into the Church, Mr Haslam. I felt it to be my vocation to walk with God, like Enoch. After twenty years of it I realized that I was walking with my own ignorance and self-conceit, and that I was not within a hundred and fifty years of the experience and wisdom I was pretending to.

HASLAM Now I come to think of it, old Methuselah must have had to think twice before he took on anything for life. If I thought I was going to live nine hundred and sixty years, I don't think I should stay in the Church.

FRANKLYN If men lived even a third of that time, the Church would be very different from the thing it is.

CONRAD If I could count on nine hundred and sixty years I could make myself a real biologist, instead of what I am now—a child trying to walk. Are you sure you might not become a good clergyman if you had a few centuries to do it in?

HASLAM Oh, there's nothing much the matter with me. It's quite easy to be a decent parson. It's the Church that chokes me off. I couldn't stick it for nine hundred years. I should chuck it. You know, sometimes, when the bishop, who is the most priceless of fossils, lets off something more than usually out-of-date, the bird starts in my garden.

FRANKLYN The bird?

HASLAM Oh yes. There's a bird there that keeps on ringing "Stick it or chuck it, stick it or chuck it"—just like that—for an hour on end in the spring. I wish my father had found some other shop for me.

The parlor maid comes back

THE PARLOR MAID Any letters for the post, sir?

FRANKLYN These. [*He proffers a basket of letters. She comes to the table and takes them*]

HASLAM [*to the maid*] Have you told Mr Barnabas yet?

THE PARLOR MAID [*fidgeting a little*] No, sir.

FRANKLYN Told me what?

HASLAM She is going to leave you?

FRANKLYN. Indeed? I'm sorry. Is it our fault, Mr Haslam?

HASLAM Not a bit. She is jolly well off here.

THE PARLOR MAID [*reddening*] I have never denied it, sir. I couldn't ask for a better place. But I have only one life to live, and I mayn't get a second chance. Excuse me, sir, but the letters must go to catch the post. [*She goes out with the letters*]

The two brothers look inquiringly at Haslam
HASLAM Silly girl! Going to marry a village lot of rot and live in a hovel with him and a because tumbling over one another, just and a moustafellow has poetic-looking eyes.

CONRAD [*demonic*] She said it was because she had only one thing.

HASLAM Same thing. persuaded her to do, poor girl! The fellow marries him she'll huck it, and when she state of things, I call it to stick it. Rotten.

CONRAD You see, she hasnt time to find

out what life really means She has to die before she knows.

HASLAM [*agreeably*] Thats it

FRANKLYN. She hasnt time to form a well-instructed conscience

HASLAM [*still more cheerfully*] Quite

FRANKLYN. It goes deeper. She hasnt time to form a genuine conscience at all Some romantic points of honor and a few conventions A world without conscience that is the horror of our condition

HASLAM [*beaming*] Simply fatuous [*Rising*] Well, I suppose I'd better be going It's most awfully good of you to put up with my calling

CONRAD [*in his former low ghostly tone*] You neednt go, you know, if you are really interested

HASLAM [*fed up*] Well, I'm afraid I ought to—I really must get back—I have something to do in the—

FRANKLYN [*smiling benignly and rising to proffer his hand*] Goodbye

CONRAD [*gruffly, giving him up as a bad job*] Goodbye

HASLAM Goodbye Sorry—er—

As the rector moves to shake hands with Franklyn, feeling that he is making a frightful mess of his departure, a vigorous sunburnt young lady with hazel hair cut to the level of her neck, like an Italian youth in a Gozzoli picture, comes in impetuously She seems to have nothing on but her short skirt, her blouse, her stockings, and a pair of Norwegian shoes. in short, she is a Simple-Lifer.

THE SIMPLE-LIFER [*swooping on Conrad and kissing him*] Hallo, Nunk. Youre before your time.

CONRAD. Behave yourself Theres a visitor She turns quickly and sees the rector She instinctively switches at her Gozzoli fringe with her fingers, but gives it up as hopeless

FRANKLYN. Mr Haslam, our new rector [*To Haslam*] My daughter Cynthia

CONRAD Usually called Savvy, short for Savage

SAVVY I usually call Mr Haslam Bill, short for William. [*She strolls to the hearthrug, and surveys them calmly from that commanding position*]

FRANKLYN. You know him?

SAVVY. Rather. Sit down, Bill

FRANKLYN Mr Haslam is going, Savvy He has an engagement

SAVVY I know I'm the engagement

CONRAD. In that case, would you mind

taking him into the garden while I talk to your father?

SAVVY [*to Haslam*] Tennis?

HASLAM Rather!

SAVVY Come on [*She dances out He runs out boyishly after her*]

FRANKLYN [*leaving his table and beginning to walk up and down the room discontentedly*] Savvy's manners jar on me They would have horrified her grandmother.

CONRAD [*obstinately*] They are happier manners than Mother's manners

FRANKLYN Yes they are franker, wholesomer, better in a hundred ways And yet I squirm at them I cannot get it out of my head that Mother was a well-mannered woman, and that Savvy has no manners at all

CONRAD There wasnt any pleasure in Mother's fine manners That makes a biological difference

FRANKLYN But there was beauty in Mother's manners, grace in them, style in them. above all, decision in them Savvy is such a cub

CONRAD. So she ought to be, at her age

FRANKLYN. There it comes again! Her age! her age!

CONRAD You want her to be fully grown at eighteen You want to force her into a stuck-up, artificial, premature self-possession before she has any self to possess You just let her alone she is right enough for her years

FRANKLYN I have let her alone, and look at the result! Like all the other young people who have been let alone, she becomes a Socialist That is, she becomes hopelessly demoralized

CONRAD. Well, arnt you a Socialist?

FRANKLYN. Yes, but that is not the same thing. You and I were brought up in the old bourgeois morality We were taught bourgeois manners and bourgeois points of honor Bourgeois manners may be snobbish manners there may be no pleasure in them, as you say, but they are better than no manners Many bourgeois points of honor may be false; but at least they exist The women know what to expect and what is expected of them Savvy doesnt She is a Bolshevik and nothing else She has to improvise her manners and her conduct as she goes along It's often charming, no doubt, but sometimes she puts her foot in it frightfully, and then I feel that she is blaming me for not teaching

her better

CONRAD Well, you have something better to teach her now, at all events.

FRANKLYN Yes, but it is too late She doesnt trust me now She doesnt talk about such things to me She doesnt read anything I write She never comes to hear me lecture I am out of it as far as Savvy is concerned [*He resumes his seat at the writing-table*]

CONRAD I must have a talk to her

FRANKLYN Perhaps she will listen to you You are not her father

CONRAD I sent her my last book I can break the ice by asking her what she made of it

FRANKLYN When she heard you were coming, she asked me whether all the leaves were cut, in case it fell into your hands She hasnt read a word of it

CONRAD [*rising indignantly*] What!

FRANKLYN [*inexorably*] Not a word of it

CONRAD [*beaten*] Well, I suppose it's only natural Biology is a dry subject for a girl, and I am a pretty dry old codger [*He sits down again resignedly*]

FRANKLYN Brother if that is so, if biology as you have worked at it, and religion as I have worked at it, are dry subjects like the old stuff they taught under these names, and we two are dry old codgers, like the old preachers and professors, then the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas is a delusion Unless this withered thing religion, and this dry thing science, have come alive in our hands, alive and intensely interesting, we may just as well go out and dig the garden until it is time to dig our graves [*The parlor maid returns Franklyn is impatient at the interruption*] Well? what is it now?

THE PARLOR MAID Mr Joyce Burge on the telephone, sir He wants to speak to you

FRANKLYN [*astonished*] Mr Joyce Burge!

THE PARLOR MAID Yes, sir

FRANKLYN [*to Conrad*] What on earth does this mean? I havnt heard from him nor exchanged a word with him for years I resigned the chairmanship of the Liberal Association and shook the dust of party politics from my feet before he was Prime Minister in the Coalition Of course, he dropped me like a hot potato

CONRAD Well, now that the Coalition has chucked him out, and he is only one of the half-dozen leaders of the Opposition, perhaps he wants to pick you up again.

THE PARLOR MAID [*warningly*] He is holding the line, sir

FRANKLYN Yes all right [*He hurries out*]

The parlor maid goes to the hearthrug to make up the fire Conrad rises and strolls to the middle of the room, where he stops and looks quizzically down at her

CONRAD So you have only one life to live, eh?

THE PARLOR MAID [*dropping on her knees in consternation*] I meant no offence, sir

CONRAD You didnt give any But you know you could live a devil of a long life if you really wanted to

THE PARLOR MAID [*sitting down on her heels*] Oh, dont say that, sir It's so unsettling

CONRAD Why? Have you been thinking about it?

THE PARLOR MAID It would never have come into my head if you hadnt put it there, sir Me and cook had a look at your book.

CONRAD What!

You and cook

Had a look

At my book!

And my niece wouldnt open it! The prophet is without honor in his own family Well, what do you think of living for several hundred years? Are you going to have a try for it?

THE PARLOR MAID Well, of course youre not in earnest, sir But it does set one thinking, especially when one is going to be married

CONRAD What has that to do with it? He may live as long as you, you know

THE PARLOR MAID Thats just it, sir You see, he must take me for better for worse, til death do us part Do you think he would be so ready to do that, sir, if he thought it might be for several hundred years?

CONRAD Thats true And what about yourself?

THE PARLOR MAID Oh, I tell you straight out, sir, I'd never promise to live with the same man as long as that I wouldnt put up with my own children as long as that. Why, cook figured it out, sir, that when you were only 200, you might marry your own great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson and not even know who he was

CONRAD Well, why not? For all you know, the man you are going to marry may be your great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother's great-great-great-great-great-

great-grandson

THE PARLOR MAID But do you think it would ever be thought respectable, sir?

CONRAD My good girl, all biological necessities have to be made respectable whether we like it or not, so you needn't worry yourself about that

Franklyn returns and crosses the room to his chair, but does not sit down. The parlor maid goes out.

CONRAD Well, what does Joyce Burge want?

FRANKLYN Oh, a silly misunderstanding. I have promised to address a meeting in Middlesborough; and some fool has put it into the papers that I am "coming to Middlesborough," without any explanation. Of course, now that we are on the eve of a general election, political people think I am coming there to contest the parliamentary seat. Burge knows that I have a following, and thinks I could get into the House of Commons and head a group there. So he insists on coming to see me. He is staying with some people at Dollis Hill, and can be here in five or ten minutes, he says.

CONRAD But didn't you tell him that it's a false alarm?

FRANKLYN. Of course I did; but he won't believe me.

CONRAD Called you a liar, in fact?

FRANKLYN No. I wish he had. Any sort of plain speaking is better than the nauseous sham goodfellowship our democratic public men get up for show use. He pretends to believe me, and assures me his visit is quite disinterested, but why should he come if he has no axe to grind? These chaps never believe anything they say themselves, and naturally they cannot believe anything anyone else says.

CONRAD [*rising*] Well, I shall clear out. It was hard enough to stand the party politicians before the war, but now that they have managed to half kill Europe between them, I can't be civil to them, and I don't see why I should be.

FRANKLYN. Wait a bit. We have to find out how the world will take our new gospel. [*Conrad sits down again*] Party politicians are still unfortunately an important part of the world. Suppose we try it on Joyce Burge.

CONRAD How can you? You can tell things only to people who can listen. Joyce Burge has talked so much that he has lost the power

of listening. He doesn't listen even in the House of Commons.

Savvy rushes in breathless, followed by Haslam, who remains timidly just inside the door.

SAVVY [*running to Franklyn*] I say! Who do you think has just driven up in a big car?

FRANKLYN Mr Joyce Burge, perhaps.

SAVVY [*disappointed*] Oh, they know, Bill. Why didn't you tell us he was coming? I have nothing on.

HASLAM I'd better go, hadn't I?

CONRAD You just wait here, both of you. When you start yawning, Joyce Burge will take the hint, perhaps.

SAVVY [*to Franklyn*] May we?

FRANKLYN Yes, if you promise to behave yourself.

SAVVY [*making a wry face*] That will be a treat, won't it?

THE PARLOR MAID [*entering and announcing*] Mr Joyce Burge. [*Haslam hastily moves to the fireplace; and the parlor maid goes out and shuts the door when the visitor has passed in.*]

FRANKLYN [*hurrying past Savvy to his guest with the false cordiality he has just been denouncing*] Oh! Here you are. Delighted to see you. [*He shakes Burge's hand, and introduces Savvy*] My daughter.

SAVVY [*not daring to approach*] Very kind of you to come.

Joyce Burge stands fast and says nothing, but he screws up his cheeks into a smile at each introduction, and makes his eyes shine in a very winning manner. He is a well-fed man turned fifty, with broad forehead, and grey hair which, his neck being short, falls almost to his collar.

FRANKLYN. Mr Haslam, our rector.

Burge conveys an impression of shining like a church window; and Haslam seizes the nearest library chair on the hearth, and swings it round for Burge between the stool and Conrad. He then retires to the window seat at the other side of the room, and is joined by Savvy. They sit there, side by side, hunched up with their elbows on their knees and their chins on their hands, providing Burge with a sort of Strangers' Gallery during the ensuing sitting.

FRANKLYN I forget whether you know my brother Conrad. He is a biologist.

BURGE [*suddenly bursting into energetic action and shaking hands heartily with Conrad*] By reputation only, but very well, of course. How I wish I could have devoted myself to biology! I have always been interested in rocks and strata and volcanoes and so forth.

they throw such a light on the age of the earth [*With conviction*] There is nothing like biology "The cloud-capped towers, the solemn binnacles, the gorgeous temples, the great globe itself yea, all that it inherit shall dissolve, and, like this influential pageant faded, leave not a rack behind" That's biology, you know good sound biology [*He sits down So do the others, Franklyn on the stool, and Conrad on his Chippendale*] Well, my dear Barnabas, what do you think of the situation? Dont you think the time has come for us to make a move?

FRANKLYN The time has always come to make a move

BURGE How true! But what is the move to be? You are a man of enormous influence We know that Weve always known it We have to consult you whether we like it or not. We—

FRANKLYN [*interrupting firmly*] I never meddle in party politics now

SAVVY It's no use saying you have no influence, daddy Heaps of people swear by you

BURGE [*shining at her*] Of course they do Come! let me prove to you what we think of you Shall we find you a first-rate constituency to contest at the next election? One that wont cost you a penny A metropolitan seat What do you say to the Strand?

FRANKLYN My dear Burge, I am not a child Why do you go on wasting your party funds on the Strand? You know you cannot win it

BURGE We cannot win it, but you—

FRANKLYN Oh, please!

SAVVY The Strand's no use, Mr Burge I once canvassed for a Socialist there Cheese it

BURGE Cheese it!

HASLAM [*spluttering with suppressed laughter*] Priceless!

SAVVY Well, I suppose I shouldnt say cheese it to a Right Honorable But the Strand, you know! Do come off it

FRANKLYN You must excuse my daughter's shocking manners, Burge, but I agree with her that popular democratic statesmen soon come to believe that everyone they speak to is an ignorant dupe and a born fool into the bargain

BURGE [*laughing genially*] You old aristocrat, you! But believe me, the instinct of the people is sound—

CONRAD [*cutting in sharply*] Then why are you in the Opposition instead of in the Government?

BURGE [*showing signs of temper under this heckling*] I deny that I am in the Opposition morally The Government does not represent the country. I was chucked out of the Coalition by a Tory conspiracy. The people want me back I dont want to go back

FRANKLYN [*gently remonstrant*] My dear Burge of course you do.

BURGE [*turning on him*] Not a bit of it. I want to cultivate my garden I am not interested in politics I am interested in roses. I havnt a scrap of ambition I went into politics because my wife shoved me into them, bless her! But I want to serve my country What else am I for? I want to save my country from the Tories They dont represent the people The man they have made Prime Minister has never represented the people, and you know it. Lord Dunreen is the bitterest old Tory left alive What has he to offer to the people?

FRANKLYN [*cutting in before Burge can proceed—as he evidently intends—to answer his own question*] I will tell you He has ascertainable beliefs and principles to offer The people know where they are with Lord Dunreen They know what he thinks right and what he thinks wrong With your followers they never know where they are With you they never know where they are

BURGE [*amazed*] With me!

FRANKLYN Well, where are you? What are you?

BURGE Barnabas you must be mad You ask me what I am?

FRANKLYN I do

BURGE I am, if I mistake not, Joyce Burge pretty well known throughout Europe, and indeed throughout the world, as the man who—unworthily perhaps, but not quite unsuccessfully—held the helm when the ship of State weathered the mightiest hurricane that has ever burst with earth-shaking violence on the land of our fathers

FRANKLYN I know that. I know who you are And the earth-shaking part of it to me is that though you were placed in that enormously responsible position, neither I nor anyone else knows what your beliefs are, or even whether you have either beliefs or principles. What we did know was that your Government was formed largely of men who

regarded you as a robber of henroosts, and whom you regarded as enemies of the people.

BURGE [*adroitly, as he thinks*] I agree with you I agree with you absolutely. I don't believe in coalition governments

FRANKLYN. Precisely. Yet you formed two

BURGE Why? Because we were at war. That is what you fellows never would realize. The Hun was at the gate. Our country, our lives, the honor of our wives and mothers and daughters, the tender flesh of our innocent babes, were at stake. Was that a time to argue about principles?

FRANKLYN I should say it was the time of all others to confirm the resolution of our own men and gain the confidence and support of public opinion throughout the world by a declaration of principle. Do you think the Hun would ever have come to the gate if he had known that it would be shut in his face on principle? Did he not hold his own against you until America boldly affirmed the democratic principle and came to our rescue? Why did you let America snatch that honor from England?

BURGE Barnabas America was carried away by words, and had to eat them at the Peace Conference. Beware of eloquence. it is the bane of popular speakers like you

FRANKLYN	{ <i>exclaiming</i>	Well!!
SAVVY	{ <i>all</i>	I like that!
HASLAM	{ <i>together</i>	Priceless!

BURGE [*continuing remorselessly*] Come down to facts. It wasn't principle that won the war. It was the British fleet and the blockade. America found the talk: I found the shells. You cannot win wars by principles, but you can win elections by them. There I am with you. You want the next election to be fought on principles. That is what it comes to, doesn't it?

FRANKLYN I don't want it to be fought at all? An election is a moral horror, as bad as a battle except for the blood. A mud bath for every soul concerned in it. You know very well that it will not be fought on principle.

BURGE On the contrary it will be fought on nothing else. I believe a program is a mistake. I agree with you that principle is what we want

FRANKLYN Principle without program, eh?

BURGE Exactly. There it is in three words.

FRANKLYN Why not in one word? Platitudes. That is what principle without program means.

BURGE [*puzzled but patient, trying to get at Franklyn's drift in order to ascertain his price*] I have not made myself clear. Listen. I am agreeing with you. I am on your side. I am accepting your proposal. There isn't going to be any more coalition. This time there won't be a Tory in the Cabinet. Every candidate will have to pledge himself to Free Trade, slightly modified by consideration for our Overseas Dominions; to Disestablishment; to Reform of the House of Lords; to a revised scheme of Taxation of Land Values, and to doing something or other to keep the Irish quiet. Does that satisfy you?

FRANKLYN It does not even interest me. Suppose your friends do commit themselves to all this! What does it prove about them except that they are hopelessly out of date even in party politics? that they have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since 1885? What is it to me that they hate the Church and hate the landed gentry, that they are jealous of the nobility, and have shipping shares instead of manufacturing businesses in the Midlands? I can find you hundreds of the most sordid rascals, or the most densely stupid reactionaries, with all these qualifications

BURGE. Personal abuse proves nothing. Do you suppose the Tories are all angels because they are all members of the Church of England?

FRANKLYN No, but they stand together as members of the Church of England, whereas your people, in attacking the Church, are all over the shop. The supporters of the Church are of one mind about religion. Its enemies are of a dozen minds. The Churchmen are a phalanx. Your people are a mob in which atheists are jostled by Plymouth Brethren, and Positivists by Pillars of Fire. You have with you all the crudest unbelievers and all the crudest fanatics

BURGE We stand, as Cromwell did, for liberty of conscience, if that is what you mean

FRANKLYN How can you talk such rubbish over the graves of your conscientious objectors? All law limits liberty of conscience: if a man's conscience allows him to steal your watch or to shirk military service, how much liberty do you allow it? Liberty of conscience is not my point.

BURGE [*testily*] I wish you would come to your point. Half the time you are saying that you must have principles; and when I offer you principles you say they won't work.

FRANKLYN You have not offered me any principles Your party shibboleths are not principles If you get into power again you will find yourself at the head of a rabble of Socialists and anti-Socialists, of Jingo Imperialists and Little Englanders, of cast-iron Materialists and ecstatic Quakers, of Christian Scientists and Compulsory Inoculationists, of Syndicalists and Bureaucrats in short, of men differing fiercely and irreconcilably on every principle that goes to the root of human society and destiny, and the impossibility of keeping such a team together will force you to sell the pass again to the solid Conservative Opposition

BURGE [*rising in wrath*] Sell the pass again! You accuse me of having sold the pass!

FRANKLYN When the terrible impact of real warfare swept your parliamentary sham warfare into the dustbin, you had to go behind the backs of your followers and make a secret agreement with the leaders of the Opposition to keep you in power on condition that you dropped all legislation of which they did not approve And you could not even hold them to their bargain, for they presently betrayed the secret and forced the coalition on you

BURGE I solemnly declare that this is a false and monstrous accusation

FRANKLYN Do you deny that the thing occurred? Were the uncontradicted reports false? Were the published letters forgeries?

BURGE Certainly not But I did not do it I was not Prime Minister then It was that old dotard, that played-out old humbug Lubin He was Prime Minister then, not I

FRANKLYN Do you mean to say you did not know?

BURGE [*sitting down again with a shrug*] Oh, I had to be told. But what could I do? If we had refused we might have had to go out of office

FRANKLYN Precisely

BURGE Well, could we desert the country at such a crisis? The Hun was at the gate Everyone has to make sacrifices for the sake of the country at such moments We had to rise above party, and I am proud to say we never gave party a second thought We stuck to—

CONRAD Office?

BURGE [*turning on him*] Yes, sir, to office that is, to responsibility, to danger, to heart-sickening toil, to abuse and misunderstand-

ing, to a martyrdom that made us envy the very soldiers in the trenches If you had had to live for months on aspirin and bromide of potassium to get a wink of sleep, you wouldn't talk about office as if it were a catch

FRANKLYN Still, you admit that under our parliamentary system Lubin could not have helped himself?

NURSE. On that subject my lips are closed Nothing will induce me to say one word against the old man I never have, and I never will Lubin is old he has never been a real statesman he is as lazy as a cat on a hearthrug you can't get him to attend to anything he is good for nothing but getting up and making speeches with a peroration that goes down with the back benches But I say nothing against him I gather that you do not think much of me as a statesman, but at all events I can get things done I can hustle even you will admit that But Lubin! Oh my stars, Lubin! If you only knew—

The parlor maid opens the door and announces a visitor

THE PARLOR MAID Mr Lubin

BURGE [*bounding from his chair*] Lubin! Is this a conspiracy?

They all rise in amazement, staring at the door Lubin enters a man at the end of his sixties, a Yorkshireman with the last traces of Scandinavian flax still in his white hair, undistinguished in stature, unassuming in his manner, and taking his simple dignity for granted, but wonderfully comfortable and quite self-assured in contrast to the intellectual restlessness of Franklyn and the mesmeric self-assertiveness of Burge His presence suddenly brings out the fact that they are unhappy men, ill at ease, square pegs in round holes, whilst he flourishes like a primrose

The parlor maid withdraws

LUBIN [*coming to Franklyn*] How do you do, Mr Barnabas? [*He speaks very comfortably and kindly, much as if he were the host, and Franklyn an embarrassed but welcome guest*] I had the pleasure of meeting you once at the Mansion House I think it was to celebrate the conclusion of the hundred years' peace with America

FRANKLYN [*shaking hands*] It was long before that a meeting about Venezuela, when we were on the point of going to war with America

LUBIN [*not at all put out*] Yes you are quite right I knew it was something about America

[*He pats Franklyn's hand*] And how have you been all this time? Well, eh?

FRANKLYN [*smiling to soften the sarcasm*] A few vicissitudes of health naturally in so long a time.

LUBIN. Just so Just so [*Looking round at Savvy*] The young lady is—?

FRANKLYN My daughter, Savvy

Savvy comes from the window between her father and Lubin

LUBIN [*taking her hand affectionately in both his*] And why has she never come to see us?

BURGE I dont know whether you have noticed, Lubin, that I am present.

Savvy takes advantage of this diversion to slip away to the settee, where she is stealthily joined by Haslam, who sits down on her left

LUBIN [*seating himself in Burge's chair with ineffable comfortableness*] My dear Burge. if you imagine that it is possible to be within ten miles of your energetic presence without being acutely aware of it, you do yourself the greatest injustice How are you? And how are your good newspaper friends? [*Burge makes an explosive movement, but Lubin goes on calmly and sweetly*] And what are you doing here with my old friend Barnabas, if I may ask?

BURGE [*sitting down in Conrad's chair, leaving him standing uneasily in the corner*] Well, just what you are doing, if you want to know I am trying to enlist Mr Barnabas's valuable support for my party.

LUBIN Your party, eh? The newspaper party?

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BURGE Very kind of you, Lubin Let me remark that you cannot lead a progressive party without getting a move on

LUBIN You mean you cannot. I did it for

ten years without the least difficulty And very comfortable, prosperous, pleasant years they were

BURGE. Yes; but what did they end in?

LUBIN. In you, Burge You dont complain of that, do you?

BURGE [*fiercely*] In plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, murder, and sudden death

LUBIN [*with an appreciative chuckle*] The Nonconformist can quote the prayer-book for his own purposes, I see. How you enjoyed yourself over that business, Burge! Do you remember the Knock-Out Blow?

BURGE It came off. dont forget that Do you remember fighting to the last drop of your blood?

LUBIN [*unruffled, to Franklyn*] By the way, I remember your brother Conrad—a wonderful brain and a dear good fellow—explaining to me that I couldnt fight to the last drop of my blood, because I should be dead long before I came to it Most interesting, and quite true He was introduced to me at a meeting where the suffragettes kept disturbing me They had to be carried out kicking and making a horrid disturbance

CONRAD No it was later, at a meeting to support the Franchise Bill which gave them the vote

LUBIN [*discovering Conrad's presence for the first time*] Youre right. it was I knew it had something to do with women My memory never deceives me Thank you Will you introduce me to this gentleman, Barnabas?

CONRAD [*not at all affably*] I am the Conrad in question [*He sits down in dudgeon on the vacant Chippendale*]

LUBIN Are you? [*Looking at him pleasantly*] Yes; of course you are I never forget a face. But [*with an arch turn of his eyes to Savvy*] your pretty niece engaged all my powers of vision

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BURGE [*scandalized*] Sixty-six games of bridge on Sunday!!!

LUBIN You probably sang sixty-six hymns But as I cannot boast either your admirable voice or your spiritual fervor, I had to fall back on bridge

FRANKLYN If I may go back to the subject of your visit, it seems to me that you may both be completely superseded by the Labor Party

BURGE But I am in the truest sense myself a Labor leader I— [*He stops, as Lubin has risen with a half-suppressed yawn, and is already talking calmly, but without a pretence of interest!*]

LUBIN The Labor Party! Oh no, Mr Barnabas No, no, no, no, no [*He moves in Savvy's direction*] There will be no trouble about that Of course we must give them a few seats more, I quite admit, than we should have dreamt of leaving to them before the war; but— [*by this time he has reached the sofa where Savvy and Haslam are seated He sits down between them, takes her hand, and drops the subject of Labor*] Well, my dear young lady? What is the latest news? Whats going on? Have you seen Shoddy's new play? Tell me all about it, and all about the latest books, and all about everything

SAVVY You have not met Mr Haslam Our Rector

LUBIN [*who has quite overlooked Haslam*] Never heard of him Is he any good?

FRANKLYN I was introducing him This is Mr Haslam

HASLAM How d'ye do?

LUBIN I beg your pardon, Mr Haslam Delighted to meet you [*To Savvy*] Well, now, how many books have you written?

SAVVY [*rather overwhelmed but attracted*] None I dont write

LUBIN You dont say so! Well, what do you do? Music? Skirt-dancing?

SAVVY I dont do anything

LUBIN Thank God! You and I were born for one another Who is your favorite poet, Sally?

SAVVY Savvy

LUBIN Savvy! I never heard of him Tell me all about him Keep me up to date

SAVVY It's not a poet I am Savvy, not Sally

LUBIN. Savvy! Thats a funny name, and very pretty Savvy It sounds Chinese What does it mean?

CONRAD Short for Savage

LUBIN [*patting her hand*] La belle Sauvage.

HASLAM [*rising and surrendering Savvy to*

Lubin by crossing to the fireplace] I suppose the Church is out of it as far as progressive politics are concerned

BURGE Nonsense! That notion about the Church being unprogressive is one of those shibboleths that our party must drop The Church is all right essentially Get rid of the establishment, get rid of the bishops, get rid of the candlesticks, get rid of the 39 articles, and the Church of England is just as good as any other Church, and I dont care who hears me say so

LUBIN It doesnt matter a bit who hears you say so, my dear Burge [*To Savvy*] Who did you say your favorite poet was?

SAVVY I dont make pets of poets Who's yours?

LUBIN Horace

SAVVY Horace who?

LUBIN Quintus Horatius Flaccus the noblest Roman of them all, my dear

SAVVY Oh, if he is dead, that explains it. I have a theory that all the dead people we feel especially interested in must have been ourselves. You must be Horace's reincarnation

LUBIN [*delighted*] That is the very most charming and penetrating and intelligent thing that has ever been said to me Barnabas will you exchange daughters with me? I can give you your choice of two

FRANKLYN Man proposes Savvy disposes

LUBIN What does Savvy say?

BURGE Lubin I came here to talk politics

LUBIN Yes you have only one subject, Burge I came here to talk to Savvy Take Burge into the next room, Barnabas, and let him rip

BURGE [*half-angry, half-indulgent*] No, but really, Lubin, we are at a crisis—

LUBIN My dear Burge, life is a disease, and the only difference between one man and another is the stage of the disease at which he lives You are always at the crisis I am always in the convalescent stage I enjoy convalescence It is the part that makes the illness worth while

SAVVY [*half-rising*] Perhaps I'd better run away I am distracting you

LUBIN [*making her sit down again*] Not at all, my dear You are only distracting Burge Jolly good thing for him to be distracted by a pretty girl Just what he needs

BURGE I sometimes envy you, Lubin The great movement of mankind, the giant sweep

of the ages, passes you by and leaves you standing

LUBIN It leaves me sitting, and quite comfortable, thank you Go on sweeping When you are tired of it, come back, and you will find England where it was, and me in my accustomed place, with Miss Savvy telling me all sorts of interesting things.

SAVVY [*who has been growing more and more restless*] Dont let him shut you up, Mr Burge You know, Mr Lubin, I am frightfully interested in the Labor movement, and in Theosophy, and in reconstruction after the war, and all sorts of things. I daresay the flappers in your smart set are tremendously flattered when you sit beside them and are nice to them as you are being nice to me, but I am not smart, and I am no use as a flapper. I am dowdy and serious I want you to be serious If you refuse, I shall go and sit beside Mr Burge, and ask him to hold my hand.

LUBIN He wouldnt know how to do it, my dear Burge has a reputation as a profligate—

BURGE [*starting*] Lubin this is monstrous I—

LUBIN [*continuing*]—but he is really a model of domesticity His name is coupled with all the most celebrated beauties; but for him there is only one woman, and that is not you, my dear, but his very charming wife

BURGE You are destroying my character in the act of pretending to save it Have the goodness to confine yourself to your own character and your own wife Both of them need all your attention

LUBIN I have the privilege of my age and of my transparent innocence I have not to struggle with your volcanic energy

BURGE [*with an immense sense of power*] No, by George!

FRANKLYN I think I shall speak both for my brother and myself, and possibly also for my daughter, if I say that since the object of your visit and Mr Joyce Burge's is to some extent political, we should hear with great interest something about your political aims, Mr Lubin

LUBIN [*assenting with complete good humor, and becoming attentive, clear, and businesslike in his tone*] By all means, Mr Barnabas What we have to consider first, I take it, is what prospect there is of our finding you beside us in the House after the next election

FRANKLYN When I speak of politics, Mr Lubin, I am not thinking of elections, or

available seats, or party funds, or the registers, or even, I am sorry to have to add, of parliament as it exists at present. I had much rather you talked about bridge than about electioneering: it is the more interesting game of the two.

BURGE He wants to discuss principles, Lubin.

LUBIN [*very cool and clear*] I understand Mr Barnabas quite well. But elections are unsettled things principles are settled things

CONRAD [*impatiently*] Great Heavens!—

LUBIN [*interrupting him with quiet authority*] One moment, Dr Barnabas The main principles on which modern civilized society is founded are pretty well understood among educated people. That is what our dangerously half-educated masses and their pet demagogues—if Burge will excuse that expression—

BURGE Dont mind me Go on. I shall have something to say presently.

LUBIN —that is what our dangerously half-educated people do not realize Take all this fuss about the Labor Party, with its imaginary new principles and new politics The Labor members will find that the immutable laws of political economy take no more notice of their ambitions and aspirations than the law of gravitation I speak, if I may say so, with knowledge, for I have made a special study of the Labor question

FRANKLYN [*with interest and some surprise*] Indeed?

LUBIN Yes It occurred quite at the beginning of my career. I was asked to deliver an address to the students at the Working Men's College; and I was strongly advised to comply, as Gladstone and Morley and others were doing that sort of thing at the moment. It was rather a troublesome job, because I had not gone into political economy at the time As you know, at the university I was a classical scholar; and my profession was the Law. But I looked up the text-books, and got up the case most carefully I found that the correct view is that all this Trade Unionism and Socialism and so forth is founded on the ignorant delusion that wages and the production and distribution of wealth can be controlled by legislation or by any human action whatever. They obey fixed scientific laws, which have been ascertained and settled finally by the highest economic authorities. Naturally I do not at this dis-

tance of time remember the exact process of reasoning, but I can get up the case again at any time in a couple of days, and you may rely on me absolutely, should the occasion arise, to deal with all these ignorant and unpractical people in a conclusive and convincing way, except, of course, as far as it may be advisable to indulge and flatter them a little so as to let them down without creating ill feeling in the working-class electorate. In short, I can get that lecture up again almost at a moment's notice.

SAVVY But, Mr Lubin, I have had a university education too, and all this about wages and distribution being fixed by immutable laws of political economy is obsolete rot.

FRANKLYN [*shocked*] Oh, my dear! That is not polite.

LUBIN No, no, no. Don't scold her. She mustn't be scolded. [*To Savvy*] I understand. You are a disciple of Karl Marx.

SAVVY No, no. Karl Marx's economics are all rot.

LUBIN [*at last a little taken aback*] Dear me!

SAVVY You must excuse me, Mr Lubin, but it's like hearing a man talk about the Garden of Eden.

CONRAD Why shouldn't he talk about the Garden of Eden? It was a first attempt at biology anyhow.

LUBIN [*recovering his self-possession*] I am sound on the Garden of Eden. I have heard of Darwin.

SAVVY But Darwin is all rot.

LUBIN What! Already!

SAVVY It's no good your smiling at me like a Cheshire cat, Mr Lubin, and I am not going to sit here mumchance like an old-fashioned goody goody wife while you men monopolize the conversation and pay out the very ghastliest exploded drivel as the latest thing in politics. I am not giving you my own ideas, Mr Lubin, but just the regular orthodox science of today. Only the most awful old fossils think that Socialism is bad economics and that Darwin invented Evolution. Ask Papa. Ask Uncle. Ask the first person you meet in the street. [*She rises and crosses to Haslam*] Give me a cigaret, Bill, will you?

HASLAM Priceless. [*He complies*]

FRANKLYN Savvy has not lived long enough to have any manners, Mr Lubin, but that is where you stand with the younger generation. Don't smoke, dear.

Savvy, with a shrug of rather mutinous resignation, throws the cigaret into the fire. Haslam, on the point of lighting one for himself, changes his mind.

LUBIN [*shrend and serious*] Mr Barnabas, I confess I am surprised; and I will not pretend that I am convinced. But I am open to conviction. I may be wrong.

BURGE [*in a burst of irony*] Oh no. Impossible! Impossible!

LUBIN Yes, Mr Barnabas, though I do not possess Burge's genius for being always wrong, I have been in that position once or twice. I could not conceal from you, even if I wished to, that my time has been so completely filled by my professional work as a lawyer, and later on by my duties as leader of the House of Commons in the days when Prime Ministers were also leaders—

BURGE [*stung*] Not to mention bridge and smart society.

LUBIN —not to mention the continual and trying effort to make Burge behave himself, that I have not been able to keep my academic reading up to date. I have kept my classics brushed up out of sheer love for them, but my economics and my science, such as they were, may possibly be a little rusty. Yet I think I may say that if you and your brother will be so good as to put me on the track of the necessary documents, I will undertake to put the case to the House or to the country to your entire satisfaction. You see, as long as you can shew these troublesome half-educated people who want to turn the world upside down that they are talking nonsense, it really does not matter very much whether you do it in terms of what Miss Barnabas calls obsolete rot or in terms of what her granddaughter will probably call unmitigated tosh. I have no objection whatever to denounce Karl Marx. Anything I can say against Darwin will please a large body of sincerely pious voters. If it will be easier to carry on the business of the country on the understanding that the present state of things is to be called Socialism, I have no objection in the world to call it Socialism. There is the precedent of the Emperor Constantine, who saved the society of his own day by agreeing to call his Imperialism Christianity. Mind I must not go ahead of the electorate. You must not call a voter a Socialist until—

FRANKLYN Until he is a Socialist. Agreed.

LUBIN Oh, not at all. You need not wait.

for that You must not call him a Socialist until he wishes to be called a Socialist that is all Surely you would not say that I must not address my constituents as gentlemen until they are gentlemen I address them as gentlemen because they wish to be so addressed [*He rises from the sofa and goes to Franklyn, placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder*] Do not be afraid of Socialism, Mr Barnabas You need not tremble for your property or your position or your dignity England will remain what England is, no matter what new political names may come into vogue. I do not intend to resist the transition to Socialism You may depend on me to guide it, to lead it, to give suitable expression to its aspirations, and to steer it clear of Utopian absurdities I can honestly ask for your support on the most advanced Socialist grounds no less than on the soundest Liberal ones

BURGE In short, Lubin, youre incorrigible You dont believe anything is going to change The millions are still to toil—the people—my people—for I am a man of the people—

LUBIN [*interrupting him contemptuously*] Dont be ridiculous, Burge You are a country solicitor, further removed from the people, more foreign to them, more jealous of letting them up to your level, than any duke or any archbishop

BURGE [*hotly*] I deny it You think I have never been poor. You think I have never cleaned my own boots You think my fingers have never come out through the soles when I was cleaning them You think—

LUBIN I think you fall into the very common mistake of supposing that it is poverty that makes the proletarian and money that makes the gentleman You are quite wrong. You never belonged to the people you belonged to the impecunious Impecuniosity and broken boots are the lot of the unsuccessful middle class, and the commonplaces of the early struggles of the professional and younger son class I defy you to find a farm laborer in England with broken boots Call a mechanic one of the poor, and he'll punch your head When you talk to your constituents about the toiling millions, they dont consider that you are referring to them They are all third cousins of somebody with a title or a park I am a Yorkshireman, my friend I know England; and you dont. If you did you would know—

BURGE What do you know that I dont know?

LUBIN I know that we are taking up too much of Mr Barnabas's time [*Franklyn rises*]. May I take it, my dear Barnabas, that I may count on your support if we succeed in forcing an election before the new register is in full working order?

BURGE [*rising also*] May the party count on your support? I say nothing about myself Can the party depend on you? Is there any question of yours that I have left unanswered?

CONRAD We havnt asked you any, you know.

BURGE May I take that as a mark of confidence?

CONRAD If I were a laborer in your constituency, I should ask you a biological question?

LUBIN No you wouldnt, my dear Doctor. Laborers never ask questions

BURGE Ask it now I have never flinched from being heckled Out with it Is it about the land?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about the Church?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about the House of Lords?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about Proportional Representation?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about Free Trade?

CONRAD. No

BURGE Is it about the priest in the school?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about Ireland?

CONRAD No

BURGE Is it about Germany?

CONRAD. No

BURGE Well, is it about Republicanism? Come! I wont flinch. Is it about the Monarchy?

CONRAD. No

BURGE Well, what the devil is it about, then?

CONRAD You understand that I am asking the question in the character of a laborer who earned thirteen shillings a week before the war and earns thirty now, when he can get it?

BURGE Yes: I understand that I am ready for you Out with it

CONRAD And whom you propose to represent in parliament?

BURGE Yes, yes, yes Come on

CONRAD The question is this Would you allow your son to marry my daughter, or your daughter to marry my son?

BURGE [*taken aback*] Oh, come! Thats not a political question

CONRAD Then, as a biologist, I dont take the slightest interest in your politics; and I shall not walk across the street to vote for you or anyone else at the election. Good evening

LUBIN Serve you right, Burge! Dr Barnabas you have my assurance that my daughter shall marry the man of her choice, whether he be lord or laborer May I count on your support?

BURGE [*hurling the epithet at him*] Humbug!

SAVVY Stop [*They all stop short in the movement of leavetaking to look at her*] Daddy are you going to let them off like this? How are they to know anything if nobody ever tells them? If you dont, I will

CONRAD You cant. You didnt read my book, and you know nothing about it You just hold your tongue

SAVVY I just wont, Nunk I shall have a vote when I am thirty, and I ought to have it now Why are these two ridiculous people to be allowed to come in and walk over us as if the world existed only to play their silly parliamentary game?

FRANKLYN [*severely*] Savvy you really must not be uncivil to our guests

SAVVY I'm sorry But Mr Lubin didnt stand on much ceremony with me, did he? And Mr Burge hasnt addressed a single word to me I'm not going to stand it You and Nunk have a much better program than either of them It's the only one we are going to vote for, and they ought to be told about it for the credit of the family and the good of their own souls You just tip them a chapter from the gospel of the brothers Barnabas, Daddy

Lubin and Burge turn inquiringly to Franklyn, suspecting a move to form a new party

FRANKLYN It is quite true, Mr Lubin, that I and my brother have a little program of our own which—

CONRAD [*interrupting*] It's not a little program it's an almighty big one It's not our own it's the program of the whole of civilization

BURGE. Then why split the party before you have put it to us? For God's sake let us

have no more splits. I am here to learn. I am here to gather your opinions and represent them I invite you to put your views before me I offer myself to be heckled You have asked me only an absurd non-political question.

FRANKLYN Candidly, I fear our program will be thrown away on you It would not interest you.

BURGE [*with challenging audacity*] Try Lubin can go if he likes, but I am still open to new ideas, if only I can find them

FRANKLYN [*to Lubin*] Are you prepared to listen, Mr Lubin, or shall I thank you for your very kind and welcome visit, and say good evening?

LUBIN [*sitting down resignedly on the settee, but involuntarily making a movement which looks like the stifling of a yawn*] With pleasure, Mr Barnabas Of course you know that before I can adopt any new plank in the party platform, it will have to reach me through the National Liberal Federation, which you can approach through your local Liberal and Radical Association

FRANKLYN I could recall to you several instances of the addition to your party program of measures of which no local branch of your Federation had ever dreamt But I understand that you are not really interested I will spare you, and drop the subject.

LUBIN [*waking up a little*] You quite misunderstand me Please do not take it in that way I only—

BURGE [*talking him down*] Never mind the Federation I will answer for the Federation Go on, Barnabas go on Never mind Lubin [*he sits down in the chair from which Lubin first displaced him*]

FRANKLYN Our program is only that the term of human life shall be extended to three hundred years

LUBIN [*softly*] Eh?

BURGE [*explosively*] What!

SAVVY. Our election cry is "Back to Methuselah!"

HASLAM Priceless!

Lubin and Burge look at one another

CONRAD. No We are not mad

SAVVY. Theyre not joking either They mean it

LUBIN [*cautiously*] Assuming that, in some sense which I am for the moment unable to fathom, you are in earnest, Mr Barnabas, may I ask what this has to do with politics?

FRANKLYN The connection is very evident. You are now, Mr Lubin, within immediate reach of your seventieth year. Mr Joyce Burge is your junior by about eleven years. You will go down to posterity as one of a European group of immature statesmen and monarchs who, doing the very best for your respective countries of which you were capable, succeeded in all-but-wrecking the civilization of Europe, and did, in effect, wipe out of existence many millions of its inhabitants.

BURGE. Less than a million.

FRANKLYN That was our loss alone.

BURGE Oh, if you count foreigners—!

HASLAM. God counts foreigners, you know.

SAVVY [*with intense satisfaction*] Well said, Bill.

FRANKLYN I am not blaming you. Your task was beyond human capacity. What with our huge armaments, our terrible engines of destruction, our systems of coercion manned by an irresistible police, you were called on to control powers so gigantic that one shudders at the thought of their being entrusted even to an infinitely experienced and benevolent God, much less to mortal men whose whole life does not last a hundred years.

BURGE We won the war. Don't forget that.

FRANKLYN No, the soldiers and sailors won it, and left you to finish it. And you were so utterly incompetent that the multitudes of children slain by hunger in the first years of peace made us all wish we were at war again.

CONRAD. It's no use arguing about it. It is now absolutely certain that the political and social problems raised by our civilization cannot be solved by mere human mushrooms who decay and die when they are just beginning to have a glimmer of the wisdom and knowledge needed for their own government.

LUBIN Quite an interesting idea, Doctor. Extravagant. Fantastic. But quite interesting. When I was young I used to feel my human limitations very acutely.

BURGE God knows I have often felt that I could not go on if it had not been for the sense that I was only an instrument in the hands of a Power above us.

CONRAD. I'm glad you both agree with us, and with one another.

LUBIN I have not gone so far as that, I think. After all, we have had many very able political leaders even within your recollection and mine.

FRANKLYN Have you read the recent biographies—Dilke's, for instance—which revealed the truth about them?

LUBIN I did not discover any new truth revealed in these books, Mr Barnabas.

FRANKLYN What! Not the truth that England was governed all that time by a little woman who knew her own mind?

SAVVY. Hear, hear!

LUBIN. That often happens. Which woman do you mean?

FRANKLYN. Queen Victoria, to whom your Prime Ministers stood in the relation of naughty children whose heads she knocked together when their tempers and quarrels became intolerable. Within thirteen years of her death Europe became a hell.

BURGE Quite true. That was because she was piously brought up, and regarded herself as an instrument. If a statesman remembers that he is only an instrument, and feels quite sure that he is rightly interpreting the divine purpose, he will come out all right, you know.

FRANKLYN. The Kaiser felt like that. Did he come out all right?

BURGE Well, let us be fair, even to the Kaiser. Let us be fair.

FRANKLYN. Were you fair to him when you won an election on the program of hanging him?

BURGE Stuff! I am the last man alive to hang anybody; but the people wouldn't listen to reason. Besides, I knew the Dutch wouldn't give him up.

SAVVY. Oh, don't start arguing about poor old Bill. Stick to our point. Let these two gentlemen settle the question for themselves. Mr Burge, do you think Mr Lubin is fit to govern England?

BURGE. No. Frankly, I don't.

LUBIN [*remonstrant*] Really!

CONRAD. Why?

BURGE Because he has no conscience. That's why.

LUBIN [*shocked and amazed*] Oh!

FRANKLYN Mr Lubin, do you consider Joyce Burge qualified to govern England?

LUBIN [*with dignified emotion, wounded, but without bitterness*] Excuse me, Mr Barnabas; but before I answer that question I want to say this. Burge we have had differences of opinion; and your newspaper friends have said hard things of me. But we worked together for years; and I hope I have done

LUBIN Tut tut! My dear Burge what are you dreaming of? Mr Barnabas I am a very patient man, But will you tell me what earthly use or interest there is in a conclusion that cannot be realized? I grant you that if we could live three hundred years we should all be, perhaps wiser, certainly older You will grant me in return, I hope, that if the sky fell we should all catch larks

FRANKLYN Your turn now, Conrad Go ahead

CONRAD I dont think it's any good I dont think they want to live longer than usual

LUBIN Although I am a mere child of 69, I am old enough to have lost the habit of crying for the moon

BURGE Have you discovered the elixir of life or have you not? If not, I agree with Lubin that you are wasting our time.

CONRAD Is your time of any value?

BURGE [*unable to believe his ears*] My time of any value! What do you mean?

LUBIN [*smiling comfortably*] From your high scientific point of view, I daresay, none whatever, Professor In any case I think a little perfectly idle discussion would do Burge good After all, we might as well hear about the elixir of life as read novels, or whatever Burge does when he is not playing golf on Walton Heath What is your elixir, Dr Barnabas? Lemons? Sour milk? Or what is the latest?

BURGE We were just beginning to talk seriously, and now you snatch at the chance of talking rot [*He rises*] Good evening [*He turns to the door*].

CONRAD [*rudely*] Die as soon as you like Good evening

BURGE [*hesitating*] Look here I took sour milk twice a day until Metchnikoff died. He thought it would keep him alive for ever, and he died of it

CONRAD You might as well have taken sour beer

BURGE. You believe in lemons?

CONRAD I wouldnt eat a lemon for ten pounds

BURGE [*sitting down again*] What do you recommend?

CONRAD [*rising with a gesture of despair*] Whats the use of going on, Frank? Because I am a doctor, and because they think I have a bottle to give them that will make them live for ever, they are listening to me for the first time with their mouths open and their eyes shut. Thats their notion of science.

SAVVY Steady, Nunk! Hold the fort
CONRAD [*growls and sits down*]

LUBIN You volunteered the consultation, Doctor I may tell you that, far from sharing the credulity as to science which is now the fashion, I am prepared to demonstrate that during the last fifty years, though the Church has often been wrong, and even the Liberal Party has not been infallible, the men of science have always been wrong

CONRAD Yes the fellows you call men of science The people who make money by it, and their medical hangers-on But has anybody been right?

LUBIN The poets and story tellers, especially the classical poets and story tellers, have been, in the main, right I will ask you not to repeat this as my opinion outside, for the vote of the medical profession and its worshippers is not to be trifled with

FRANKLYN You are quite right. the poem is our real clue to biological science The most scientific document we possess at present is, as your grandmother would have told you quite truly the story of the Garden of Eden

BURGE [*pricking up his ears*] Whats that? If you can establish that, Barnabas, I am prepared to hear you out with my very best attention I am listening Go on

FRANKLYN Well, you remember, dont you, that in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were not created mortal, and that natural death, as we call it, was not a part of life, but a later and quite separate invention?

BURGE Now you mention it, thats true Death came afterwards

LUBIN What about accidental death? That was always possible

FRANKLYN Precisely Adam and Eve were hung up between two frightful possibilities One was the extinction of mankind by their accidental death. The other was the prospect of living for ever They could bear neither They decided that they would just take a short turn of a thousand years, and meanwhile hand on their work to a new pair Consequently, they had to invent natural birth and natural death, which are, after all, only modes of perpetuating life without putting on any single creature the terrible burden of immortality.

LUBIN I see The old must make room for the new.

BURGE Death is nothing but making room.

Thats all there is in it or ever has been in it.

FRANKLYN Yes, but the old must not desert their posts until the new are ripe for them. They desert them now two hundred years too soon.

SAVVY I believe the old people are the new people reincarnated, Nunk I suspect I am Eve. I am very fond of apples, and they always disagree with me.

CONRAD You are Eve, in a sense. The Eternal Life persists, in a sense, in its bodies and minds and general consciousness, like new clothes. You are only a new hat and frock on Eve.

FRANKLYN Yes. Bodies and minds ever better and better fitted to carry out its eternal pursuit.

LUBIN [*with quiet scepticism*] What pursuit, may one ask, Mr Barnabas?

FRANKLYN The pursuit of omnipotence and omniscience. Greater power and greater knowledge these are what we are all pursuing even at the risk of our lives and the sacrifice of our pleasures. Evolution is that pursuit and nothing else. It is the path to godhead. A man differs from a microbe only in being further on the path.

LUBIN And how soon do you expect this modest end to be reached?

FRANKLYN Never, thank God! As there is no limit to power and knowledge there can be no end. "The power. And the glory, world without end" have those words meant nothing to you?

BURGE [*pulling out an old envelope*] I should like to make a note of that [*He does so*].

CONRAD There will always be something to live for.

BURGE [*pocketing his envelope and becoming more and more businesslike*] Right. I have got that. Now what about sin? What about the Fall? How do you work them in?

CONRAD I dont work in the Fall. The Fall is outside Science. But I daresay Frank can work it in for you.

BURGE [*to Franklyn*] I wish you would, you know. It's important. Very important.

FRANKLYN Well, consider it this way. It is clear that when Adam and Eve were immortal it was necessary that they should make the earth an extremely comfortable place to live in.

BURGE True. If you take a house on a ninety-nine years lease, you spend a good deal of money on it. If you take it for three

months you generally have a bill for dilapidations to pay at the end of them.

FRANKLYN Just so. Consequently, when Adam had the Garden of Eden on a lease for ever, he took care to make it what the house agents call a highly desirable country residence. But the moment he invented death, and became a tenant for life only, the place was no longer worth the trouble. It was then that he let the thistles grow. Life was so short that it was no longer worth his while to do anything thoroughly well.

BURGE Do you think that is enough to constitute what an average elector would consider a Fall? Is it tragic enough?

FRANKLYN That is only the first step of the Fall. Adam did not fall down that step only. he fell down a whole flight. For instance, before he invented birth he dared not have lost his temper; for if he had killed Eve he would have been lonely and barren to all eternity. But when he invented birth, and anyone who was killed could be replaced he could afford to let himself go. He undoubtedly invented wife-beating; and that was another step down. One of his sons invented meat-eating. The other was horrified at the innovation. With the ferocity which is still characteristic of bulls and other vegetarians, he slew his beefsteak-eating brother, and thus invented murder. That was a very steep step. It was so exciting that all the others began to kill one another for sport, and thus invented war, the steepest step of all. They even took to killing animals as a means of killing time, and then, of course, ate them to save the long and difficult labor of agriculture. I ask you to contemplate our fathers as they came crashing down all the steps of this Jacob's ladder that reached from paradise to a hell on earth in which they had multiplied the chances of death from violence, accident, and disease until they could hardly count on three score and ten years of life, much less the thousand that Adam had been ready to face! With that picture before you, will you now ask me where was the Fall? You might as well stand at the foot of Snowdon and ask me where is the mountain. The very children see it so plainly that they compress its history into a two line epic.

Old Daddy Long Legs wouldnt say his prayers.

Take him by the hind legs and throw him downstairs.

LUBIN [*still immovably sceptical*] And what does Science say to this fairy tale, Doctor Barnabas? Surely Science knows nothing of Genesis, or of Adam and Eve

CONRAD Then it isn't Science that's all Science has to account for everything, and everything includes the Bible

FRANKLYN. The Book of Genesis is a part of nature like any other part of nature The fact that the tale of the Garden of Eden has survived and held the imagination of men spellbound for centuries, whilst hundreds of much more plausible and amusing stories have gone out of fashion and perished like last year's popular song, is a scientific fact; and Science is bound to explain it. You tell me that Science knows nothing of it. Then Science is more ignorant than the children at any village school.

CONRAD Of course if you think it more scientific to say that what we are discussing is not Adam and Eve and Eden, but the phylogeny of the blastoderm—

SAVVY. You needn't swear, Nunk

CONRAD Shut up, you I am not swearing. [*To Lubin*] If you want the professional humbug of rewriting the Bible in words of four syllables, and pretending it's something new, I can humbug you to your heart's content I can call Genesis Phylogenesis Let the Creator say, if you like, "I will establish an antipathetic symbiosis between thee and the female, and between thy blastoderm and her blastoderm" Nobody will understand you, and Savvy will think you are swearing. The meaning is the same

HASLAM. Priceless. But it's quite simple The one version is poetry. the other is science.

FRANKLYN The one is classroom jargon: the other is inspired human language

LUBIN [*calmly reminiscent*] One of the few modern authors into whom I have occasionally glanced is Rousseau, who was a sort of Deist like Burge—

BURGE [*interrupting him forcibly*] Lubin has this stupendously important communication which Professor Barnabas has just made to us a communication for which I shall be indebted to him all my life long: has this, I say, no deeper effect on you than to set you pulling my leg by trying to make out that I am an infidel

LUBIN. It's very interesting and amusing, Burge, and I think I see a case in it I think I could undertake to argue it in an ecclesias-

tical court But important is hardly a word I should attach to it.

BURGE Good God! Here is this professor. a man utterly removed from the turmoil of our political life: devoted to pure learning in its most abstract phases, and I solemnly declare he is the greatest politician, the most inspired party leader, in the kingdom I take off my hat to him I, Joyce Burge, give him best And you sit there purring like an Angel at, and *as* *is* *nothing* in it!

CONRAD [*with his eyes widely*] Hallo! What have I done to deserve this tribute?

BURGE Done! You have put the Liberal Party into power for the next thirty years, Doctor that's what you've done.

CONRAD. God forbid!

BURGE It's all up with the Church now. Thanks to you, we go to the country with one cry and one only. Back to the Bible! Think of the effect on the Nonconformist vote You gather that in with one hand, and you gather in the modern scientific sceptical professional vote with the other The village atheist and the first cornet in the local Salvation Army band meet on the village green and shake hands. You take your school children, your Bible class under the Cowper-Temple clause, into the museum You shew the kids the Piltdown skull, and you say, "That's Adam That's Eve's husband." You take the spectacle-wearing student from the laboratory in Owens College, and when he asks you for a truly scientific history of Evolution, you put into his hand The Pilgrim's Progress You— [*Savvy and Haslam explode into shrieks of merriment*] What are you two laughing at?

SAVVY. Oh, go on, Mr Burge. Don't stop

HASLAM Priceless!

FRANKLYN Would thirty years of office for the Liberal Party seem so important to you, Mr Burge, if you had another two and a half centuries to live?

BURGE [*decisively*] No. You will have to drop that part of it. The constituencies won't swallow it.

LUBIN [*seriously*] I am not so sure of that, Burge I am not sure that it may not prove the only point they will swallow.

BURGE It will be no use to us even if they do It's not a party point. It's as good for the other side as for us.

LUBIN. Not necessarily. If we get in first with it, it will be associated in the public

mind with our party Suppose I put it forward as a plank in our program that we advocate the extension of human life to three hundred years! Dunreen, as leader of the opposite party, will be bound to oppose me to denounce me as a visionary and so forth By doing so he will place himself in the position of wanting to rob the people of two hundred and thirty years of their natural life The Unionists will become the party of Premature Death, and we shall become the Longevity party

BURGE [*shaken*] You really think the electorate would swallow it?

LUBIN My dear Burge is there anything the electorate will not swallow if it is judiciously put to them? But we must make sure of our ground We must have the support of the men of science Is there serious agreement among them, Doctor, as to the possibility of such an evolution as you have described?

CONRAD Yes. Ever since the reaction against Darwin set in at the beginning of the present century, all scientific opinion worth counting has been converging rapidly upon Creative Evolution

FRANKLYN Poetry has been converging on it philosophy has been converging on it religion has been converging on it It is going to be the religion of the twentieth century a religion that has its intellectual roots in philosophy and science just as medieval Christianity had its intellectual roots in Aristotle

LUBIN But surely any change would be so extremely gradual that—

CONRAD Dont deceive yourself It's only the politicians who improve the world so gradually that nobody can see the improvement. The notion that Nature does not proceed by jumps is only one of the budget of plausible lies that we call classical education Nature always proceeds by jumps She may spend twenty thousand years making up her mind to jump, but when she makes it up at last, the jump is big enough to take us into a new age

LUBIN [*impressed*] Fancy my being leader of the party for the next three hundred years!

BURGE. What!!!

LUBIN Perhaps hard on some of the younger men I think in fairness I shall have to step aside to make room after another century or so. that is, if Mimi can be persuaded to

give up Downing Street

BURGE This is too much Your colossal conceit blinds you to the most obvious necessity of the political situation

LUBIN You mean my retirement I really cannot see that it is a necessity I could not see it when I was almost an old man—or at least an elderly one Now that it appears that I am a young man, the case for it breaks down completely [*To Conrad*] May I ask are there any alternative theories? Is there a scientific Opposition?

CONRAD Well, some authorities hold that the human race is a failure, and that a new form of life, better adapted to high civilization, will supersede us as we have superseded the ape and the elephant.

BURGE The superman eh?

CONRAD No Some being quite different from us

LUBIN Is that altogether desirable?

FRANKLYN I fear so However that may be, we may be quite sure of one thing We shall not be let alone The force behind evolution, call it what you will, is determined to solve the problem of civilization, and if it cannot do it through us, it will produce some more capable agents Man is not God's last word God can still create If you cannot do His work He will produce some being who can

BURGE [*with zealous reverence*] What do we know about Him, Barnabas? What does anyone know about Him?

CONRAD We know this about Him with absolute certainty The power my brother calls God proceeds by the method of Trial and Error, and if we turn out to be one of the errors, we shall go the way of the mastodon and the megatherium and all the other scrapped experiments

LUBIN [*rising and beginning to walk up and down the room with his considering cap on*] I admit that I am impressed, gentlemen I will go so far as to say that your theory is likely to prove more interesting than ever Welsh Disestablishment was But as a practical politician—hm! Eh, Burge?

CONRAD We are not practical politicians We are out to get something done Practical politicians are people who have mastered the art of using parliament to prevent anything being done

FRANKLYN When we get matured statesmen and citizens—

LUBIN [*stopping short*] Citizens! Oh! Are the

citizens to live three hundred years as well as the statesmen?

CONRAD Of course

LUBIN I confess that had not occurred to me [*he sits down abruptly, evidently very unfavorably affected by this new light*]

Savvy and Haslam look at one another with unspeakable feelings

BURGE Do you think it would be wise to go quite so far at first? Surely it would be more prudent to begin with the best men

FRANKLYN You need not be anxious about that. It will begin with the best men.

LUBIN I am glad to hear you say so You see, we must put this into a practical parliamentary shape

BURGE We shall have to draft a Bill that is the long and the short of it Until you have your Bill drafted you dont know what you are really doing that is my experience

LUBIN Quite so My idea is that whilst we should interest the electorate in this as a sort of religious aspiration and personal hope, using it at the same time to remove their prejudices against those of us who are getting on in years, it would be in the last degree upsetting and even dangerous to enable everyone to live longer than usual Take the mere question of the manufacture of the specific, whatever it may be! There are forty millions of people in the country Let me assume for the sake of illustration that each person would have to consume, say, five ounces a day of the elixir. That would be—let me see—five times three hundred and sixty-five is—um—twenty-five—thirty-two—eighteen—eighteen hundred and twenty-five ounces a year. just two ounces over the hundredweight.

BURGE Two million tons a year, in round numbers, of stuff that everyone would clamor for that men would trample down women and children in the streets to get at You couldnt produce it There would be blue murder It's out of the question We must keep the actual secret to ourselves

CONRAD [*staring at them*] The actual secret! What on earth is the man talking about?

BURGE The stuff The powder. The bottle The tabloid Whatever it is You said it wasnt lemons

CONRAD My good sir I have no powder, no bottle, no tabloid. I am not a quack. I am a biologist This is a thing thats going to happen.

LUBIN [*completely let down*] Going to happen! Oh! Is that all? [*He looks at his watch*]

BURGE Going to happen! What do you mean? Do you mean that you cant make it happen?

CONRAD No more than I could have made you happen

FRANKLYN We can put it into men's heads that there is nothing to prevent its happening but their own will to die before their work is done, and their own ignorance of the splendid work there is for them to do

CONRAD Spread that knowledge and that conviction, and as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow, the thing will happen

FRANKLYN We dont know where or when or to whom it will happen It may happen first to someone in this room

HASLAM. It wont happen to me thats jolly sure

CONRAD It might happen to anyone It might happen to the parlormaid How do we know?

SAVVY The parlormaid! Oh, thats nonsense, Nunk.

LUBIN [*once more quite comfortable*] I think Miss Savvy has delivered the final verdict.

BURGE Do you mean to say that you have nothing more practical to offer than the mere wish to live longer? Why, if people could live by merely wishing to, we should all be living for ever already! Everybody would like to live for ever. Why dont they?

CONRAD Pshaw! Everybody would like to have a million of money Why havnt they? Because the men who would like to be millionaires wont save sixpence even with the chance of starvation staring them in the face The men who want to live for ever wont cut off a glass of beer or a pipe of tobacco, though they believe the teetotallers and non-smokers live longer. That sort of liking is not willing See what they do when they know they must

FRANKLYN Do not mistake mere idle fancies for the tremendous miracle-working force of Will nerved to creation by a conviction of Necessity I tell you men capable of such willing, and realizing its necessity, will do it reluctantly, under inner compulsion, as all great efforts are made They will hide what they are doing from themselves. they will take care not to know what they are doing They will live three hundred years, not because they would like to, but because the soul deep down in them will know that

BURGE-LUBIN Five double x three two gamma Burge-Lubin

Barnabas puts a plug in number five, turns his pointer to double x, puts another plug in 32, presses a button and looks round at Burge-Lubin, who is now visible to him as well as audible

BARNABAS [*curtly*] Oh! That you, President?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes They told me you wanted me to ring you up Anything wrong?

BARNABAS [*harsh and querulous*] I wish to make a protest

BURGE-LUBIN [*good-humored and mocking*] What! Another protest! Whats wrong now?

BARNABAS If you only knew all the protests I havnt made, you would be surprised at my patience It is you who are always treating me with the grossest want of consideration

BURGE-LUBIN What have I done now?

BARNABAS You have put me down to go to the Record Office today to receive that American fellow, and do the honors of a ridiculous cinema show That is not the business of the Accountant General it is the business of the President It is an outrageous waste of my time, and an unjustifiable shirking of your duty at my expense I refuse to go You must go

BURGE-LUBIN My dear boy, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take the job off your hands—

BARNABAS Then do it Thats all I want [*he is about to snitch off*]

BURGE-LUBIN Dont switch off Listen This American has invented a method of breathing under water

BARNABAS What do I care? I dont want to breathe under water

BURGE-LUBIN You may, my dear Barnabas, at any time You know you never look where you are going when you are immersed in your calculations Some day you will walk into the Serpentine This man's invention may save your life

BARNABAS [*angrily*] Will you tell me what that has to do with your putting your ceremonial duties on to my shoulders? I will not be trifled [*he vanishes and is replaced by the blank screen*]

BURGE-LUBIN [*indignantly holding down his button*] Dont cut us off, please we have not finished. I am the President, speaking to the Accountant General. What are you dreaming of?

A WOMAN'S VOICE Sorry [*The screen shows Barnabas as before*]

BURGE-LUBIN Since you take it that way, I will go in your place It's a pity, because, you see, this American thinks you are the greatest living authority on the duration of human life; and—

BARNABAS [*interrupting*] The American thinks! What do you mean? I am the greatest living authority on the duration of human life Who dares dispute it?

BURGE-LUBIN. Nobody, dear lad, nobody Dont fly out at me It is evident that you have not read the American's book

BARNABAS Dont tell me that you have, or that you have read any book except a novel for the last twenty years, for I wont believe you

BURGE-LUBIN. Quite right, dear old fellow I havnt read it. But I have read what The Times Literary Supplement says about it

BARNABAS I dont care two straws what it says about it Does it say anything about me?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes

BARNABAS Oh, does it? What?

BURGE-LUBIN It points out that an extraordinary number of first-rate persons like you and me have died by drowning during the last two centuries, and that when this invention of breathing under water takes effect, your estimate of the average duration of human life will be upset

BARNABAS [*alarmed*] Upset my estimate! Gracious Heavens! Does the fool realize what that means? Do you realize what that means?

BURGE-LUBIN I suppose it means that we shall have to amend the Act

BARNABAS Amend my Act! Monstrous!

BURGE-LUBIN But we must We cant ask people to go on working until they are forty-three unless our figures are unchallengeable You know what a row there was over those last three years, and how nearly the too-old-at-forty people won

BARNABAS They would have made the British Islands bankrupt if theyd won But you dont care for that you care for nothing but being popular

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, well I shouldnt worry if I were you, for most people complain that there is not enough work for them, and would be only too glad to stick on instead of retiring at forty-three if only they were asked as a favor instead of having to

BARNABAS Thank you I need no consolation. [*He rises determinedly and puts on his*

fillet]

BURGE-LUBIN. Are you off? Where are you going to?

BARNABAS To that cinema tomfoolery, of course I shall put this American impostor in his place. *[He goes out]*

BURGE-LUBIN *[calling after him]* God bless you, dear old chap! *[With a chuckle, he switches off, and the screen becomes blank. He presses a button and holds it down while he calls]* Hallo!

A WOMAN'S VOICE Hallo!

BURGE-LUBIN *[formally]* The President respectfully solicits the privilege of an interview with the Chief Secretary, and holds himself entirely at his honor's august disposal

A CHINESE VOICE. He is coming.

BURGE-LUBIN Oh! That you, Confucius? So good of you. Come along *[he releases the button]*

A man in a yellow gown, presenting the general appearance of a Chinese sage, enters

BURGE-LUBIN *[jocularly]* Well, illustrious Sage-&-Onions, how are your poor sore feet?

CONFUCIUS *[gravely]* I thank you for your kind inquiries I am well.

BURGE-LUBIN Thats right Sit down and make yourself comfortable. Any business for me today?

CONFUCIUS *[sitting down on the first chair round the corner of the table to the President's right]* None

BURGE-LUBIN Have you heard the result of the bye-election?

CONFUCIUS A walk-over Only one candidate

BURGE-LUBIN Any good?

CONFUCIUS He was released from the County Lunatic Asylum a fortnight ago Not mad enough for the lethal chamber not sane enough for any place but the division lobby A very popular speaker

BURGE-LUBIN I wish the people would take a serious interest in politics

CONFUCIUS I do not agree The Englishman is not fitted by nature to understand politics Ever since the public services have been manned by Chinese, the country has been well and honestly governed What more is needed?

BURGE-LUBIN What I cant make out is that China is one of the worst governed countries on earth

CONFUCIUS No It was badly governed twenty years ago, but since we forbade any Chinaman to take part in our public services,

and imported natives of Scotland for that purpose, we have done well Your information here is always twenty years out of date

BURGE-LUBIN People dont seem to be able to govern themselves. I cant understand it. Why should it be so?

CONFUCIUS Justice is impartiality. Only strangers are impartial

BURGE-LUBIN It ends in the public services being so good that the Government has nothing to do but think

CONFUCIUS Were it otherwise, the Government would have too much to do to think

BURGE-LUBIN. Is that any excuse for the English people electing a parliament of lunatics?

CONFUCIUS The English people always did elect parliaments of lunatics. What does it matter if your permanent officials are honest and competent?

BURGE-LUBIN You do not know the history of this country What would my ancestors have said to the menagerie of degenerates that is still called the House of Commons? Confucius you will not believe me; and I do not blame you for it, but England once saved the liberties of the world by inventing parliamentary government, which was her peculiar and supreme glory

CONFUCIUS I know the history of your country perfectly well It proves the exact contrary.

BURGE-LUBIN How do you make that out?

CONFUCIUS The only power your parliament ever had was the power of withholding supplies from the king.

BURGE-LUBIN. Precisely That great Englishman Simon de Montfort—

CONFUCIUS. He was not an Englishman; he was a Frenchman He imported parliaments from France

BURGE-LUBIN *[surprised]* You dont say so!

CONFUCIUS The king and his loyal subjects killed Simon for forcing his French parliament on them. The first thing British parliaments always did was to grant supplies to the king for life with enthusiastic expressions of loyalty, lest they should have any real power, and be expected to do something

BURGE-LUBIN Look here, Confucius you know more history than I do, of course; but democracy—

CONFUCIUS An institution peculiar to China And it was never really a success there

BURGE-LUBIN But the Habeas Corpus Act!

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

cius The English always suspended it threatened to be of the slightest

BURGE-LUBIN Well, trial by jury you cant that we established that?

CONFUCIUS All cases that were dangerous e governing classes were tried in the Chamber or by Court Martial, except n the prisoner was not tried at all, but cuted after calling him names enough to ae him unpopular

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, bother! You may be ght in these little details; but in the large e have managed to hold our own as a great ce Well, people who could do nothing ouldnt have done that, you know

CONFUCIUS I did not say you could do nothing. You could fight You could eat You could drink Until the twentieth century you could produce children You could play games You could work when you were forced to But you could not govern yourselves

BURGE-LUBIN Then how did we get our reputation as the pioneers of liberty?

CONFUCIUS By your steadfast refusal to be governed at all A horse that kicks everyone who tries to harness and guide him may be a pioneer of liberty, but he is not a pioneer of government In China he would be shot

BURGE-LUBIN Stuff! Do you imply that the administration of which I am president is no Government?

CONFUCIUS I do I am the Government.

BURGE-LUBIN You! You!! You fat yellow lump of conceit!

CONFUCIUS Only an Englishman could be so ignorant of the nature of government as to suppose that a capable statesman cannot be fat, yellow, and conceited Many Englishmen are slim, red-nosed, and modest. Put them in my place, and within a year you will be back in the anarchy and chaos of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, if you go back to the dark ages, I have nothing more to say But we did not perish We extricated ourselves from that chaos We are now the best governed country in the world How did we manage that if we are such fools as you pretend?

CONFUCIUS You did not do it until the slaughter and ruin produced by your anarchy forced you at last to recognize two inexorable

First, that government is absolutely

necessary to civilization, and that you could not maintain civilization by merely doing down your neighbor, as you called it, and cutting off the head of your king whenever he happened to be a logical Scot and tried to take his position seriously Second, that government is an art of which you are congenitally incapable Accordingly, you imported educated negresses and Chinese to govern you Since then you have done very well

BURGE-LUBIN So have you, you old humbug All the same, I dont know how you stand the work you do You seem to me positively to like public business Why wont you let me take you down to the coast some week-end and teach you marine golf?

CONFUCIUS It does not interest me I am not a barbarian

BURGE-LUBIN You mean that I am?

CONFUCIUS That is evident

BURGE-LUBIN How?

CONFUCIUS People like you They like cheerful good-natured barbarians They have elected you President five times in succession They will elect you five times more I like you You are better company than a dog or a horse because you can speak

BURGE-LUBIN Am I a barbarian because you like me?

CONFUCIUS Surely Nobody likes me I am held in awe Capable persons are never liked I am not likeable, but I am indispensable

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, cheer up, old man theres nothing so disagreeable about you as all that I dont dislike you, and if you think I'm afraid of you, you jolly well dont know Burge-Lubin thats all

CONFUCIUS You are brave yes It is a forr of stupidity

BURGE-LUBIN You may not be brave or doesnt expect it from a Chink But you ha the devil's own cheek

CONFUCIUS I have the assured certainty the man who sees and knows Your ge bluster, your cheery self-confidence, pleasant, like the open air But they blind they are vain I seem to see a dog wag his tail and bark joyously But leaves my heel he is lost

BURGE-LUBIN Thank you for a han compliment I have a big dog, and he best fellow I know If you knew how ugher you are than a chow, you start those comparisons, though

Well, if you have nothing for me to do, I am going to leave your heel for the rest of the day and enjoy myself. What would you recommend me to do with myself?

CONFUCIUS Give yourself up to contemplation; and great thoughts will come to you.

BURGE-LUBIN Will they? If you think I am going to sit here on a fine day like this with my legs crossed waiting for great thoughts, you exaggerate my taste for them. I prefer marine golf [*Stopping short*] Oh, by the way, I forgot something. I have a word or two to say to the Minister of Health [*He goes back to his chair*]

CONFUCIUS Her number is—

BURGE-LUBIN. I know it.

CONFUCIUS [*rising*] I cannot understand her attraction for you. For me a woman who is not yellow does not exist, save as an official [*He goes out*]

Burge-Lubin operates his switchboard as before. The screen vanishes, and a dainty room with a bed, a wardrobe, and a dressing-table with a mirror and a snitch on it, appears. Seated at it a handsome negress is trying on a brilliant head scarf. Her dressing-gown is thrown back from her shoulders to her chair. She is in corset, knickers, and silk stockings.

BURGE-LUBIN [*horrified*] I beg your pardon a thousand times—[*The startled negress snatches the peg out of her switchboard and vanishes*]

THE NEGRESS'S VOICE Who is it?

BURGE-LUBIN. Me. The President. Burge-Lubin. I had no idea your bedroom switch was in. I beg your pardon.

The negress reappears. She has pulled the dressing-gown perfunctorily over her shoulders, and continues her experiments with the scarf, not at all put out, and rather amused by Burge's prudery.

THE NEGRESS Stupid of me. I was talking to another lady this morning, and I left the peg in.

BURGE-LUBIN But I am so sorry.

THE NEGRESS [*sunnily. still busy with the scarf*] Why? It was my fault.

BURGE-LUBIN [*embarrassed*] Well—er—er—But I suppose you were used to it in Africa.

THE NEGRESS. Your delicacy is very touching, Mr President. It would be funny if it were not so unpleasant, because, like all white delicacy, it is in the wrong place. How do you think this suits my complexion?

BURGE-LUBIN How can any really vivid color go wrong with a black satin skin? It is

our women's wretched pale faces that have to be matched and lighted. Yours is always right.

THE NEGRESS Yes it is a pity your white beauties have all the same ashy faces, the same colorless drab, the same age. But look at their beautiful noses and little lips! They are physically insipid. They have no beauty: you cannot love them, but how elegant!

BURGE-LUBIN. Can't you find an official pretext for coming to see me? Isn't it ridiculous that we have never met? It's so tantalizing to see you and talk to you, and to know all the time that you are two hundred miles away, and that I can't touch you?

THE NEGRESS I cannot live on the East Coast. It is hard enough to keep my blood warm here. Besides, my friend, it would not be safe. These distant flirtations are very charming; and they teach self-control.

BURGE-LUBIN. Damn self-control! I want to hold you in my arms—to—[*the negress snatches out the peg from the switchboard and vanishes. She is still heard laughing*] Black devil! [*He snatches out his peg furiously: her laugh is no longer heard*] Oh, these sex episodes! Why can I not resist them? Disgraceful!

Confucius returns

CONFUCIUS. I forgot. There is something for you to do this morning. You have to go to the Record Office to receive the American barbarian.

BURGE-LUBIN. Confucius: once for all, I object to this Chinese habit of describing white men as barbarians.

CONFUCIUS [*standing formally at the end of the table with his hands palm to palm*] I make a mental note that you do not wish the Americans to be described as barbarians.

BURGE-LUBIN Not at all. The Americans are barbarians. But we are not. I suppose the particular barbarian you are speaking of is the American who has invented a means of breathing under water.

CONFUCIUS He says he has invented such a method. For some reason which is not intelligible in China, Englishmen always believe any statement made by an American inventor, especially one who has never invented anything. Therefore you believe this person and have given him a public reception. Today the Record Office is entertaining him with a display of the cinematographic records of all the eminent Englishmen who have lost their lives by drowning since the cinema was in-

vented Why not go to see it if you are at a loss for something to do?

BURGE-LUBIN What earthly interest is there in looking at a moving picture of a lot of people merely because they were drowned? If they had had any sense, they would not have been drowned, probably.

CONFUCIUS That is not so. It has never been noticed before, but the Record Office has just made two remarkable discoveries about the public men and women who have displayed extraordinary ability during the past century. One is that they retained unusual youthfulness up to an advanced age. The other is that they all met their death by drowning.

BURGE-LUBIN Yes. I know. Can you explain it?

CONFUCIUS It cannot be explained. It is not reasonable. Therefore I do not believe it.

The Accountant General rushes in, looking ghastly. He staggers to the middle of the table.

BURGE-LUBIN Whats the matter? Are you ill?

BARNABAS [*choking*] No. I—[*he collapses into the middle chair*] I must speak to you in private.

Confucius calmly withdraws.

BURGE-LUBIN What on earth is it? Have some oxygen.

BARNABAS I have had some. Go to the Record Office. You will see men fainting there again and again, and being revived with oxygen, as I have been. They have seen with their own eyes as I have.

BURGE-LUBIN Seen what?

BARNABAS Seen the Archbishop of York.

BURGE-LUBIN Well, why shouldnt they see the Archbishop of York? What are they fainting for? Has he been murdered?

BARNABAS No, he has been drowned.

BURGE-LUBIN Good God! Where? When? How? Poor fellow!

BARNABAS Poor fellow! Poor thief! Poor swindler! Poor robber of his country's Exchequer! Poor fellow indeed! Wait til I catch him.

BURGE-LUBIN How can you catch him when he is dead? You're mad.

BARNABAS Dead! Who said he was dead?

BURGE-LUBIN You did. Drowned.

BARNABAS [*exasperated*] Will you listen to me? Was old Archbishop Haslam, the present man's last predecessor but four, drowned or not?

BURGE-LUBIN I dont know. Look him up in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

BARNABAS Yah! Was Archbishop Stickit, who wrote Stickit on the Psalms, drowned or not?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes, mercifully. He deserved it.

BARNABAS Was President Dickenson drowned? Was General Bullyboy drowned?

BURGE-LUBIN Who is denying it?

BARNABAS Well, we've had moving pictures of all four put on the screen today for this American, and they and the Archbishop are the same man. Now tell me I am mad.

BURGE-LUBIN I do tell you you are mad. Stark raving mad.

BARNABAS Am I to believe my own eyes or am I not?

BURGE-LUBIN You can do as you please. All I can tell you is that I dont believe your eyes if they cant see any difference between a live archbishop and two dead ones. [*The apparatus rings, he holds the button down*] Yes?

THE WOMAN'S VOICE The Archbishop of York, to see the President.

BARNABAS [*hoarse with rage*] Have him in. I'll talk to the scoundrel.

BURGE-LUBIN [*releasing the button*] Not while you are in this state.

BARNABAS [*reaching furiously for his button and holding it down*] Send the Archbishop in at once.

BURGE-LUBIN If you lose your temper, Barnabas, remember that we shall be two to one.

The Archbishop enters. He has a white band round his throat, set in a black stock. He wears a sort of kilt of black ribbons, and soft black boots that button high up on his calves. His costume does not differ otherwise from that of the President and the Accountant General, but its color scheme is black and white. He is older than the Reverend Bill Haslam was when he wooed Miss Savvy Barnabas, but he is recognizably the same man. He does not look a day over fifty, and is very well preserved even at that, but his boyishness of manner is quite gone. He now has complete authority and self-possession. In fact the President is a little afraid of him, and it seems quite natural and inevitable that he should speak first.

THE ARCHBISHOP Good day, Mr President.
BURGE-LUBIN Good day, Mr Archbishop.
Be seated.

THE ARCHBISHOP [*sitting down between them*]

Good day, Mr Accountant General

BARNABAS [*malevolently*] Good day to you I have a question to put to you, if you dont mind

THE ARCHBISHOP [*looking curiously at him, jarred by his uncivil tone*] Certainly What is it?

BARNABAS What is your definition of a thief?

THE ARCHBISHOP Rather an old-fashioned word, is it not?

BARNABAS It survives officially in my department

THE ARCHBISHOP Our departments are full of survivals Look at my tie! my apron! my boots! They are all mere survivals, yet it seems that without them I cannot be a proper Archbishop

BARNABAS Indeed! Well, in my department the word thief survives, because in the community the thing thief survives. And a very despicable and dishonorable thing he is, too

THE ARCHBISHOP [*coolly*] I daresay

BARNABAS In my department, sir, a thief is a person who lives longer than the statutory expectation of life entitles him to, and goes on drawing public money when, if he were an honest man, he would be dead

THE ARCHBISHOP Then let me say, sir, that your department does not understand its own business If you have miscalculated the duration of human life, that is not the fault of the persons whose longevity you have miscalculated And if they continue to work and produce, they pay their way, even if they live two or three centuries

BARNABAS I know nothing about their working and producing That is not the business of my department I am concerned with their expectation of life, and I say that no man has any right to go on living and drawing money when he ought to be dead

THE ARCHBISHOP You do not comprehend the relation between income and production

BARNABAS I understand my own department

THE ARCHBISHOP That is not enough Your department is part of a synthesis which embraces all the departments

BURGE-LUBIN Synthesis! This is an intellectual difficulty This is a job for Confucius I heard him use that very word the other day; and I wondered what the devil he meant [*Switching on*] Hallo! Put me through to the Chief Secretary

CONFUCIUS'S VOICE You are speaking to him

BURGE-LUBIN An intellectual difficulty, old man Something we dont understand Come and help us out.

THE ARCHBISHOP May I ask how the question has arisen?

BARNABAS Ah! You begin to smell a rat, do you? You thought yourself pretty safe. You—

BURGE-LUBIN. Steady, Barnabas Dont be in a hurry

Confucius enters

THE ARCHBISHOP [*rising*] Good morning, Mr Chief Secretary

BURGE-LUBIN [*rising in instinctive imitation of the Archbishop*] Honor us by taking a seat, O sage

CONFUCIUS Ceremony is needless [*He bows to the company, and takes the chair at the foot of the table*]

The President and the Archbishop resume their seats.

BURGE-LUBIN We wish to put a case to you, Confucius Suppose a man, instead of conforming to the official estimate of his expectation of life, were to live for more than two centuries and a half, would the Accountant General be justified in calling him a thief?

CONFUCIUS No He would be justified in calling him a liar

THE ARCHBISHOP I think not, Mr Chief Secretary What do you suppose my age is?

CONFUCIUS Fifty

BURGE-LUBIN You dont look it Forty-five, and young for your age

THE ARCHBISHOP My age is two hundred and eighty-three

BARNABAS [*morosely triumphant*] Hmp! Mad, am I?

BURGE-LUBIN Youre both mad Excuse me, Archbishop, but this is getting a bit—well—

THE ARCHBISHOP [*to Confucius*] Mr Chief Secretary. will you, to oblige me, assume that I have lived nearly three centuries? As a hypothesis?

BURGE-LUBIN What is a hypothesis?

CONFUCIUS It does not matter I understand [*To the Archbishop*] Am I to assume that you have lived in your ancestors, or by metempsychosis—

BURGE-LUBIN Met—Emp—Sy— Good Lord! What a brain, Confucius! What a brain!

THE ARCHBISHOP Nothing of that kind. Assume in the ordinary sense that I was born in the year 1887, and that I have worked continuously in one profession or another

since the year 1910 Am I a thief?

CONFUCIUS I do not know. Was that one of your professions?

THE ARCHBISHOP No I have been nothing worse than an Archbishop, a President, and a General

BARNABAS Has he or has he not robbed the Exchequer by drawing five or six incomes when he was only entitled to one? Answer me that

CONFUCIUS Certainly not. The hypothesis is that he has worked continuously since 1910 We are now in the year 2170 What is the official lifetime?

BARNABAS Seventy-eight Of course it's an average, and we dont mind a man here and there going on to ninety, or even, as a curiosity, becoming a centenarian But I say that a man who goes beyond that is a swindler

CONFUCIUS Seventy-eight into two hundred and eighty-three goes more than three and a half times Your department owes the Archbishop two and a half educations and three and a half retiring pensions

BARNABAS Stuff! How can that be?

CONFUCIUS At what age do your people begin to work for the community?

BURGE-LUBIN Three They do certain things every day when they are three Just to break them in, you know But they become self-supporting, or nearly so, at thirteen

CONFUCIUS And at what age do they retire?

BARNABAS Forty-three

CONFUCIUS That is, they do thirty years' work, and they receive maintenance and education, without working, for thirteen years of childhood and thirty-five years of superannuation, forty-eight years in all, for each thirty years' work The Archbishop has given you 260 years' work, and has received only one education and no superannuation You therefore owe him over 300 years of leisure and nearly eight educations You are thus heavily in his debt In other words, he has effected an enormous national economy by living so long, and you, by living only seventy-eight years, are profiting at his expense He is the benefactor you are the thief [*Half rising*] May I now withdraw and return to my serious business, as my own span is comparatively short?

BURGE-LUBIN Dont be in a hurry, old chap [*Confucius sits down again*] This hypothecary, or whatever you call it, is put up seriously I

dont believe it, but if the Archbishop and the Accountant General are going to insist that it's true, we shall have either to let them up or to see the thing through

BARNABAS It's no use trying these Chinese subtleties on me I'm a plain man, and though I dont understand metaphysics, and don't believe in them, I understand figures, and the Archbishop is only entitled to seventy-eight years, and he takes 283, I say he takes more than he is entitled to Get over that, you can

THE ARCHBISHOP I have not taken 28 years I have taken 23 and given 260

CONFUCIUS Do your accounts shew a deficiency or a surplus?

BARNABAS A surplus Thats what I can make out Thats the artfulness of these people.

BURGE-LUBIN That settles it Whats the use of arguing? The Chink says you are wrong and theres an end of it

BARNABAS I say nothing against the Chink's arguments. But what about my facts?

CONFUCIUS If your facts include a case of a man living 283 years, I advise you to take a few weeks at the seaside

BARNABAS Let there be an end of this hunting that I am out of my mind. Come and look at the cinema record I tell you this man is Archbishop Haslam, Archbishop Stuckit, President Dickenson, General Bullyboy and himself into the bargain all five of them

THE ARCHBISHOP I do not deny it I never have denied it Nobody has ever asked me

BURGE-LUBIN But damn it, man—I beg your pardon, Archbishop, but really, really—

THE ARCHBISHOP Dont mention it What were you going to say?

BURGE-LUBIN Well, you were drowned four times over You are not a cat, you know

THE ARCHBISHOP That is very easy to understand Consider my situation when I first made the amazing discovery that I was destined to live three hundred years! I—

CONFUCIUS [*interrupting him*] Pardon me Such a discovery was impossible You have not made it yet You may live a million years if you have already lived two hundred There is no question of three hundred years You have made a slip at the very beginning of your fairy tale, Mr Archbishop

BURGE-LUBIN Good, Confucius! [*To the Archbishop*] He has you there I dont see how you

can get over that.

THE ARCHBISHOP Yes. it is quite a good point But if the Accountant General will go to the British Museum library, and search the catalogue, he will find under his own name a curious and now forgotten book, dated 1924, entitled *The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas* That gospel was that men must live three hundred years if civilization is to be saved It shewed that this extension of individual human life was possible, and how it was likely to come about I married the daughter of one of the brothers

BARNABAS Do you mean to say you claim to be a connection of mine?

THE ARCHBISHOP I claim nothing As I have by this time perhaps three or four million cousins of one degree or another, I have ceased to call on the family

BURGE-LUBIN Gracious heavens! Four million relatives! Is that calculation correct, Confucius?

CONFUCIUS In China it might be forty millions if there were no checks on population.

BURGE-LUBIN This is a staggerer. It brings home to one—but [*recovering*] it isn't true, you know. Let us keep sane

CONFUCIUS [*to the Archbishop*] You wish us to understand that the illustrious ancestors of the Accountant General communicated to you a secret by which you could attain the age of three hundred years

THE ARCHBISHOP. No Nothing of the kind They simply believed that mankind could live any length of time it knew to be absolutely necessary to save civilization from extinction I did not share their belief at least I was not conscious of sharing it I thought I was only amused by it. To me my father-in-law and his brother were a pair of clever cranks who had talked one another into a fixed idea which had become a monomania with them It was not until I got into serious difficulties with the pension authorities after turning seventy that I began to suspect the truth

CONFUCIUS The truth?

THE ARCHBISHOP Yes, Mr Chief Secretary. the truth Like all revolutionary truths, it began as a joke As I shewed no signs of ageing after forty-five, my wife used to make fun of me by saying that I was certainly going to live three hundred years She was sixty-eight when she died, and the last thing she said to me, as I sat by her bedside

holding her hand, was "Bill you really dont look fifty I wonder—" She broke off, and fell asleep wondering, and never awoke Then I began to wonder too. That is the explanation of the three hundred years, Mr Secretary.

CONFUCIUS It is very ingenious, Mr Archbishop And very well told.

BURGE-LUBIN Of course you understand that I dont for a moment suggest the very faintest doubt of your absolute veracity, Archbishop. You know that, dont you?

THE ARCHBISHOP Quite, Mr President Only you dont believe me. that is all I do not expect you to In your place I should not believe You had better have a look at the films [*Pointing to the Accountant General*] He believes

BURGE-LUBIN. But the drowning? What about the drowning? A man might get drowned once, or even twice if he was exceptionally careless But he couldnt be drowned four times He would run away from water like a mad dog.

THE ARCHBISHOP Perhaps Mr Chief Secretary can guess the explanation of that

CONFUCIUS To keep your secret, you had to die

BURGE-LUBIN But dash it all, man, he isnt dead.

CONFUCIUS It is socially impossible not to do what everybody else does One must die at the usual time

BARNABAS Of course. A simple point of honor.

CONFUCIUS Not at all A simple necessity.

BURGE-LUBIN Well, I'm hanged if I see it. I should jolly well live for ever if I could.

THE ARCHBISHOP It is not so easy as you think. You, Mr Chief Secretary, have grasped the difficulties of the position. Let me remind you, Mr President, that I was over eighty before the 1969 Act for the Redistribution of Income entitled me to a handsome retiring pension Owing to my youthful appearance I was prosecuted for attempting to obtain public money on false pretences when I claimed it I could prove nothing, for the register of my birth had been blown to pieces by a bomb dropped on a village church years before in the first of the big modern wars I was ordered back to work as a man of forty, and had to work for fifteen years more, the retiring age being then fifty-five.

BURGE-LUBIN As late as fifty-five! How did people stand it?

THE ARCHBISHOP They made difficulties about letting me go even then, I still looked so young. For some years I was in continual trouble. The industrial police rounded me up again and again, refusing to believe that I was over age. They began to call me The Wandering Jew. You see how impossible my position was. I foresaw that in twenty years more my official record would prove me to be seventy-five, my appearance would make it impossible to believe that I was more than forty-five, and my real age would be one hundred and seventeen. What was I to do? Bleach my hair? Hobble about on two sticks? Mimic the voice of a centenarian? Better have killed myself.

BARNABAS You ought to have killed yourself. As an honest man you were entitled to no more than an honest man's expectation of life.

THE ARCHBISHOP I did kill myself. It was quite easy. I left a suit of clothes by the seashore during the bathing season, with documents in the pockets to identify me. I then turned up in a strange place, pretending that I had lost my memory, and did not know my name or my age or anything about myself. Under treatment I recovered my health, but not my memory. I have had several careers since I began this routine of life and death. I have been an archbishop three times. When I persuaded the authorities to knock down all our towns and rebuild them from the foundations, or move them, I went into the artillery, and became a general. I have been President.

BURGE-LUBIN Dickenson?

THE ARCHBISHOP Yes.

BURGE-LUBIN But they found Dickenson's body. Its ashes are buried in St Paul's.

THE ARCHBISHOP They almost always found the body. During the bathing season there are plenty of bodies. I have been cremated again and again. At first I used to attend my own funeral in disguise, because I had read about a man doing that in an old romance by an author named Bennett, from whom I remember borrowing five pounds in 1912. But I got tired of that. I would not cross the street now to read my latest epitaph.

The Chief Secretary and the President look very glum. Their incredulity is vanquished at last.

BURGE-LUBIN Look here. Do you chaps realize how awful this is? Here we are sitting calmly in the presence of a man whose death is overdue by two centuries. He may crumble into dust before our eyes at any moment.

BARNABAS Not he. He'll go on drawing his pension until the end of the world.

THE ARCHBISHOP Not quite that. My expectation of life is only three hundred years.

BARNABAS You will last out my time anyhow. That's enough for me.

THE ARCHBISHOP [*coolly*] How do you know?

BARNABAS [*taken aback*] How do I know?

THE ARCHBISHOP Yes, how do you know? I did not begin even to suspect until I was nearly seventy. I was only vain of my youthful appearance. I was not quite serious about it until I was ninety. Even now I am not sure from one moment to another, though I have given you my reason for thinking that I have quite unintentionally committed myself to a lifetime of three hundred years.

BURGE-LUBIN But how do you do it? Is it lemons? Is it Soya beans? Is it—

THE ARCHBISHOP I do not do it. It happens. It may happen to anyone. It may happen to you.

BURGE-LUBIN [*the full significance of this for himself dawning on him*] Then we three may be in the same boat with you, for all we know?

THE ARCHBISHOP You may. Therefore I advise you to be very careful how you take any step that will make my position uncomfortable.

BURGE-LUBIN Well, I'm dashed! One of my secretaries was remarking only this morning how well and young I am looking. Barnabas, I have an absolute conviction that I am one of the—the—shall I say one of the victims?—of this strange destiny.

THE ARCHBISHOP Your great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather formed the same conviction when he was between sixty and seventy. I knew him.

BURGE-LUBIN [*depressed*] Ah! But he died.

THE ARCHBISHOP No.

BURGE-LUBIN [*hopefully*] Do you mean to say he is still alive?

THE ARCHBISHOP No. He was shot. Under the influence of his belief that he was going to live three hundred years he became a changed man. He began to tell people the truth, and they disliked it so much that they took advantage of certain clauses of an Act of Parliament he had himself passed during

the Four Years War, and had purposely forgotten to repeal afterwards They took him to the Tower of London and shot him

The apparatus rings

CONFUCIUS [*answering*] Yes? [*He listens*]

A WOMAN'S VOICE The Domestic Minister has called.

BURGE-LUBIN [*not quite catching the answer*] Who does she say has called?

CONFUCIUS The Domestic Minister

BARNABAS. Oh, dash it! That awful woman!

BURGE-LUBIN She certainly is a bit of a terror I dont exactly know why, for she is not at all bad-looking.

BARNABAS [*out of patience*] For Heaven's sake, dont be frivolous

THE ARCHBISHOP He cannot help it, Mr Accountant General Three of his sixteen great - great - great - grandfathers married Lubins

BURGE-LUBIN Tut tut! I am not frivolling I did not ask the lady here Which of you did?

CONFUCIUS. It is her official duty to report personally to the President once a quarter.

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, that! Then I suppose it's my official duty to receive her Theyd better send her in. You dont mind, do you? She will bring us back to real life I dont know how you fellows feel; but I'm just going dotty.

CONFUCIUS [*into the telephone*] The President will receive the Domestic Minister at once.

They watch the door in silence for the entrance of the Domestic Minister.

BURGE-LUBIN [*suddenly, to the Archbishop*] I suppose you have been married over and over again

THE ARCHBISHOP Once You do not make vows until death when death is three hundred years off

They relapse into uneasy silence The Domestic Minister enters She is a handsome woman, apparently in the prime of life, with elegant, tense, well held-up figure, and the walk of a goddess Her expression and deportment are grave, swift, decisive, awful, unanswerable She wears a Dienesque tunic instead of a blouse, and a silver coronet instead of a gold fillet Her dress otherwise is not markedly different from that of the men, who rise as she enters, and incline their heads with instinctive awe She comes to the vacant chair between Barnabas and Confucius.

BURGE-LUBIN [*resolutely genial and gallant*] Delighted to see you, Mrs Lutestring.

CONFUCIUS We are honored by your celestial presence

BARNABAS Good day, madam

THE ARCHBISHOP I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before I am the Archbishop of York

MRS LUTESTRING Surely we have met, Mr Archbishop I remember your face We— [*she checks herself suddenly*] Ah, no I remember now it was someone else [*She sits down*]

They all sit down

THE ARCHBISHOP [*also puzzled*] Are you sure you are mistaken? I also have some association with your face, Mrs Lutestring Something like a door opening continually and revealing you And a smile of welcome when you recognized me Did you ever open a door for me, I wonder?

MRS LUTESTRING I often opened a door for the person you have just reminded me of But he has been dead many years

The rest, except the Archbishop, look at one another quickly

CONFUCIUS. May I ask how many years?

MRS LUTESTRING [*struck by his tone, looks at him for a moment with some displeasure, then replies*] It does not matter A long time

BURGE-LUBIN You mustnt rush to conclusions about the Archbishop, Mrs Lutestring He is an older bird than you think Older than you, at all events.

MRS LUTESTRING [*with a melancholy smile*] I think not, Mr President. But the subject is a delicate one I had rather not pursue it

CONFUCIUS There is a question which has not been asked

MRS LUTESTRING [*very decisively*] If it is a question about my age, Mr Chief Secretary, it had better not be asked All that concerns you about my personal affairs can be found in the books of the Accountant General.

CONFUCIUS The question I was thinking of will not be addressed to you But let me say that your sensitiveness on the point is very strange, coming from a woman so superior to all common weaknesses as we know you to be

MRS LUTESTRING I may have reasons which have nothing to do with common weaknesses, Mr Chief Secretary. I hope you will respect them

CONFUCIUS [*after bowing to her in assent*] I will now put my question Have you, Mr Archbishop, any ground for assuming, as you seem to do, that what has happened to you has not happened to other people as well?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes, by George! I never thought of that

THE ARCHBISHOP I have never met any case but my own

CONFUCIUS How do you know?

THE ARCHBISHOP Well, no one has ever told me that they were in this extraordinary position

CONFUCIUS That proves nothing Did you ever tell anybody that you were in it? You never told us. Why did you never tell us?

THE ARCHBISHOP I am surprised at the question, coming from so astute a mind as yours, Mr Secretary When you reach the age I reached before I discovered what was happening to me, I was old enough to know and fear the ferocious hatred with which human animals, like all other animals, turn upon any unhappy individual who has the misfortune to be unlike themselves in every respect to be unnatural, as they call it You will still find, among the tales of that twentieth-century classic, Wells, a story of a race of men who grew twice as big as their fellows, and another story of a man who fell into the hands of a race of blind men. The big people had to fight the little people for their lives, and the man with eyes would have had his eyes put out by the blind had he not fled to the desert, where he perished miserably Wells's teaching, on that and other matters, was not lost on me By the way, he lent me five pounds once which I never repaid, and it still troubles my conscience

CONFUCIUS And were you the only reader of Wells? If there were others like you, had they not the same reason for keeping the secret?

THE ARCHBISHOP That is true But I should know. You shortlived people are so childish. If I met a man of my own age I should recognize him at once I have never done so

MRS LUTESTRING Would you recognize a woman of your age, do you think?

THE ARCHBISHOP I—*[He stops and turns upon her with a searching look, startled by the suggestion and the suspicion it rouses]*

MRS LUTESTRING What is your age, Mr Archbishop?

BURGE-LUBIN Two hundred and eighty-three, he says That is his little joke Do you know, Mrs Lutestring, he had almost talked us into believing him when you came in and cleared the air with your robust common sense

MRS LUTESTRING Do you really feel that, Mr President? I hear the note of breezy assertion in your voice I miss the note of conviction

BURGE-LUBIN *[jumping up]* Look here Let us stop talking damned nonsense I don't wish to be disagreeable, but it's getting on my nerves The best joke won't bear being pushed beyond a certain point That point has been reached I—I'm rather busy this morning We all have our hands pretty full Confucius here will tell you that I have a heavy day before me

BARNABAS Have you anything more important than this thing, if it's true?

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, if, if, if it's true! But it isn't true

BARNABAS Have you anything at all to do?

BURGE-LUBIN Anything to do! Have you forgotten, Barnabas, that I happen to be President, and that the weight of the entire public business of this country is on my shoulders?

BARNABAS Has he anything to do, Confucius?

CONFUCIUS He has to be President

BARNABAS That means that he has nothing to do

BURGE-LUBIN *[sulkily]* Very well, Barnabas Go on making a fool of yourself *[He sits down]* Go on

BARNABAS I am not going to leave this room until we get to the bottom of this swindle

MRS LUTESTRING *[turning with deadly gravity on the Accountant General]* This what, did you say?

CONFUCIUS These expressions cannot be sustained You obscure the discussion in using them

BARNABAS *[glad to escape from her gaze by addressing Confucius]* Well, this unnatural horror Will that satisfy you?

CONFUCIUS That is in order But we do not commit ourselves to the implications of the word horror

THE ARCHBISHOP By the word horror the Accountant General means only something unusual

CONFUCIUS I notice that the honorable Domestic Minister, on learning the advanced age of the venerable prelate, shews no sign of surprise or incredulity

BURGE-LUBIN She doesn't take it seriously. Who would? Eh, Mrs Lutestring?

MRS LUTESTRING I take it very seriously indeed, Mr President I see now that I was not mistaken at first I have met the Archbishop before

THE ARCHBISHOP I felt sure of it This vision of a door opening to me, and a woman's face welcoming me, must be a reminiscence of something that really happened, though I see it now as an angel opening the gate of heaven

MRS LUTESTRING Or a parlormaid opening the door of the house of the young woman you were in love with?

THE ARCHBISHOP [*making a wry face*] Is that the reality? How these things grow in our imagination! But may I say, Mrs Lutestring, that the transfiguration of a parlormaid to an angel is not more amazing than her transfiguration to the very dignified and able Domestic Minister I am addressing I recognize the angel in you Frankly, I do not recognize the parlormaid

BURGE-LUBIN Whats a parlormaid?

MRS LUTESTRING An extinct species A woman in a black dress and white apron, who opened the house door when people knocked or rang, and was either your tyrant or your slave I was a parlormaid in the house of one of the Accountant General's remote ancestors [*To Confucius*] You asked me my age, Mr Chief Secretary I am two hundred and seventy-four

BURGE-LUBIN [*gallantly*] You dont look it You really dont look it

MRS LUTESTRING [*turning her face gravely towards him*] Look again, Mr President.

BURGE-LUBIN [*looking at her bravely until the smile fades from his face, and he suddenly covers his eyes with his hands*] Yes. you do look it I am convinced It's true Now call up the Lunatic Asylum, Confucius, and tell them to send an ambulance for me

MRS LUTESTRING [*to the Archbishop*] Why have you given away your secret? our secret?

THE ARCHBISHOP They found it out The cinema records betrayed me. But I never dreamt that there were others Did you?

MRS LUTESTRING I knew one other She was a cook. She grew tired, and killed herself

THE ARCHBISHOP Dear me! However, her death simplifies the situation, as I have been able to convince these gentlemen that the matter had better go no further

MRS LUTESTRING. What! When the Pre-

sident knows! It will be all over the place before the end of the week

BURGE-LUBIN [*injured*] Really, Mrs Lutestring! You speak as if I were a notoriously indiscreet person Barnabas have I such a reputation?

BARNABAS [*resignedly*] It cant be helped It's constitutional

CONFUCIUS It is utterly unconstitutional But, as you say, it cannot be helped

BURGE-LUBIN [*solemnly*] I deny that a secret of State has ever passed my lips—except perhaps to the Minister of Health, who is discretion personified. People think, because she is a negress—

MRS LUTESTRING It does not matter much now Once, it would have mattered a great deal But my children are all dead

THE ARCHBISHOP Yes: the children must have been a terrible difficulty Fortunately for me, I had none

MRS LUTESTRING There was one daughter who was the child of my very heart Some years after my first drowning I learnt that she had lost her sight I went to her She was an old woman of ninety-six, blind She asked me to sit and talk with her because my voice was like the voice of her dead mother

BURGE-LUBIN The complications must be frightful. Really I hardly know whether I do want to live much longer than other people

MRS LUTESTRING. You can always kill yourself, as cook did, but that was influenza. Long life is complicated, and even terrible; but it is glorious all the same I would no more change places with an ordinary woman than with a mayfly that lives only an hour

THE ARCHBISHOP. What set you thinking of it first?

MRS LUTESTRING Conrad Barnabas's book Your wife told me it was more wonderful than Napoleon's Book of Fate and Old Moore's Almanac, which cook and I used to read I was very ignorant it did not seem so impossible to me as to an educated woman Yet I forgot all about it, and married and drudged as a poor man's wife, and brought up children, and looked twenty years older than I really was, until one day, long after my husband died and my children were out in the world working for themselves, I noticed that I looked twenty years younger than I really was. The truth came to me in a flash

BURGE-LUBIN An amazing moment. Your

feelings must have been beyond description. What was your first thought?

MRS LUTESTRING Pure terror I saw that the little money I had laid up would not last, and that I must go out and work again. They had things called Old Age Pensions then miserable pittance for worn-out old laborers to die on. I thought I should be found out if I went on drawing it too long. The horror of facing another lifetime of drudgery, of missing my hard-earned rest and losing my poor little savings, drove everything else out of my mind. You people nowadays can have no conception of the dread of poverty that hung over us then, or of the utter tiredness of forty years' unending overwork and striving to make a shilling do the work of a pound.

THE ARCHBISHOP I wonder you did not kill yourself. I often wonder why the poor in those evil old times did not kill themselves. They did not even kill other people.

MRS LUTESTRING You never kill yourself, because you always may as well wait until tomorrow. And you have not energy or conviction enough to kill the others. Besides, how can you blame them when you would do as they do if you were in their place?

BURGE-LUBIN Devilish poor consolation, that.

MRS LUTESTRING There were other consolations in those days for people like me. We drank preparations of alcohol to relieve the strain of living and give us an artificial happiness.

BURGE-LUBIN { *all together*, { Alcohol!

CONFUCIUS { *making* { Piff!

BARNABAS { *wry faces* { Disgusting

MRS LUTESTRING A little alcohol would improve your temper and manners, and make you much easier to live with, Mr Accountant General.

BURGE-LUBIN [*laughing*] By George, I believe you! Try it, Barnabas.

CONFUCIUS No. Try tea. It is the more civilized poison of the two.

MRS LUTESTRING You, Mr President, were born intoxicated with your own well-fed natural exuberance. You cannot imagine what alcohol was to an underfed poor woman. I had carefully arranged my little savings so that I could get drunk, as we called it, once a week, and my only pleasure was looking forward to that poor little debauch. That is what saved me from suicide. I could not bear to miss my next carouse. But when I

stopped working, and lived on my pension, the fatigue of my life's drudgery began to wear off, because, you see, I was not really old. I recuperated. I looked younger and younger. And at last I was rested enough to have courage and strength to begin life again. Besides, political changes were making it easier. Life was a little better worth living for the nine-tenths of the people who used to be mere drudges. After that, I never turned back or faltered. My only regret now is that I shall die when I am three hundred or thereabouts. There was only one thing that made life hard, and that is gone now.

CONFUCIUS May we ask what that was?

MRS LUTESTRING Perhaps you will be offended if I tell you.

BURGE-LUBIN Offended! My dear lady, do you suppose, after such a stupendous revelation, that anything short of a blow from a sledge-hammer could produce the smallest impression on any of us?

MRS LUTESTRING Well, you see, it has been so hard on me never to meet a grown-up person. You are all such children. And I never was very fond of children, except that one girl who woke up the mother passion in me. I have been very lonely sometimes.

BURGE-LUBIN [*again gallant*] But surely, Mrs Lutestring, that has been your own fault. If I may say so, a lady of your attractions need never have been lonely.

MRS LUTESTRING Why?

BURGE-LUBIN Why! Well— Well, er— Well, er er— Well! [*he gives it up*]

THE ARCHBISHOP He means that you might have married. Curious, how little they understand our position.

MRS LUTESTRING I did marry. I married again on my hundred and first birthday. But of course I had to marry an elderly man, a man over sixty. He was a great painter. On his deathbed he said to me "It has taken me fifty years to learn my trade, and to paint all the foolish pictures a man must paint and get rid of before he comes through them to the great things he ought to paint. And now that my foot is at last on the threshold of the temple I find that it is also the threshold of my tomb." That man would have been the greatest painter of all time if he could have lived as long as I. I saw him die of old age whilst he was still, as he said himself, a gentleman amateur, like all modern painters.

BURGE-LUBIN But why had you to marry

an elderly man? Why not marry a young one? or shall I say a middle-aged one? If my own affections were not already engaged, and if, to tell the truth, I were not a little afraid of you—for you are a very superior woman, as we all acknowledge—I should esteem myself happy in—er—er—

MRS LUTESTRING Mr President. have you ever tried to take advantage of the innocence of a little child for the gratification of your senses?

BURGE-LUBIN Good Heavens, madam, what do you take me for? What right have you to ask me such a question?

MRS LUTESTRING I am at present in my two hundred and seventy-fifth year You suggest that I should take advantage of the innocence of a child of thirty, and marry it

THE ARCHBISHOP Can you shortlived people not understand that as the confusion and immaturity and primitive animalism in which we live for the first hundred years of our life is worse in this matter of sex than in any other, you are intolerable to us in that relation?

BURGE-LUBIN Do you mean to say, Mrs Lutestring, that you regard me as a child?

MRS LUTESTRING Do you expect me to regard you as a completed soul? Oh, you may well be afraid of me There are moments when your levity, your ingratitude, your shallow jollity, make my gorge rise so against you that if I could not remind myself that you are a child I should be tempted to doubt your right to live at all

CONFUCIUS Do you grudge us the few years we have? you who have three hundred!

BURGE-LUBIN You accuse me of levity! Must I remind you, madam, that I am the President, and that you are only the head of a department?

BARNABAS Ingratitude too! You draw a pension for three hundred years when we owe you only seventy-eight, and you call us ungrateful!

MRS LUTESTRING I do When I think of the blessings that have been showered on you, and contrast them with the poverty! the humiliations! the anxieties! the heartbreak! the insolence and tyranny that were the daily lot of mankind when I was learning to suffer instead of learning to live! when I see how lightly you take it all! how you quarrel over the crumpled leaves in your beds of roses! how you are so dainty about your work

that unless it is made either interesting or delightful to you you leave it to negresses and Chinamen, I ask myself whether even three hundred years of thought and experience can save you from being superseded by the Power that created you and put you on your trial.

BURGE-LUBIN My dear lady our Chinese and colored friends are perfectly happy. They are twenty times better off here than they would be in China or Liberia They do their work admirably; and in doing it they set us free for higher employments

THE ARCHBISHOP [*who has caught the infection of her indignation*] What higher employments are you capable of? you that are superannuated at seventy and dead at eighty!

MRS LUTESTRING You are not really doing higher work You are supposed to make the decisions and give the orders; but the negresses and the Chinese make up your minds for you and tell you what orders to give, just as my brother, who was a sergeant in the Guards, used to prompt his officers in the old days When I want to get anything done at the Health Ministry I do not come to you I go to the black lady who has been the real president during your present term of office, or to Confucius, who goes on for ever while presidents come and presidents go

BURGE-LUBIN This is outrageous This is treason to the white race And let me tell you, madam, that I have never in my life met the Minister of Health, and that I protest against the vulgar color prejudice which disparages her great ability and her eminent services to the State My relations with her are purely telephonic, gramophonic, photophonic, and, may I add, platonic

THE ARCHBISHOP There is no reason why you should be ashamed of them in any case, Mr President But let us look at the position impersonally Can you deny that what is happening is that the English people have become a Joint Stock Company admitting Asiatics and Africans as shareholders?

BARNABAS Nothing like it. I know all about the old joint stock companies The shareholders did no work

THE ARCHBISHOP That is true; but we, like them, get our dividends whether we work or not We work partly because we know there would be no dividends if we did not, and partly because if we refuse we are regarded as mentally deficient and put into a lethal

chamber. But what do we work at? Before the few changes we were forced to make by the revolutions that followed the Four Years War, our governing classes had been so rich, as it was called, that they had become the most intellectually lazy and fat-headed people on the face of the earth. There is a good deal of that fat still clinging to us.

BURGE-LUBIN As President, I must not listen to unpatriotic criticisms of our national character, Mr Archbishop.

THE ARCHBISHOP As Archbishop, Mr President, it is my official duty to criticize the national character unsparingly. At the canonization of Saint Henrik Ibsen, you yourself unveiled the monument to him which bears on its pedestal the noble inscription, "I came not to call sinners, but the righteous, to repentance." The proof of what I say is that our routine work, and what may be called our ornamental and figure-head work, is being more and more sought after by the English, whilst the thinking, organizing, calculating, directing work is done by yellow brains, brown brains, and black brains, just as it was done in my early days by Jewish brains, Scottish brains, Italian brains, German brains. The only white men who still do serious work are those who, like the Accountant General, have no capacity for enjoyment, and no social gifts to make them welcome outside their offices.

BARNABAS Confound your impudence! I had gifts enough to find you out, anyhow.

THE ARCHBISHOP [*disregarding this outburst*] If you were to kill me as I stand here, you would have to appoint an Indian to succeed me. I take precedence today not as an Englishman, but as a man with more than a century and a half of fully adult experience. We are letting all the power slip into the hands of the colored people. In another hundred years we shall be simply their household pets.

BURGE-LUBIN [*reacting buoyantly*] Not the least danger of it. I grant you we leave the most troublesome part of the labor of the nation to them. And a good job too, why should we drudge at it? But think of the activities of our leisure! Is there a jollier place on earth to live in than England out of office hours? And to whom do we owe that? To ourselves, not to the niggers. The nigger and the Chink are all right from Tuesday to Friday, but from Friday to Tuesday they are

simply nowhere, and the real life of England is from Friday to Tuesday.

THE ARCHBISHOP That is terribly true. In devising brainless amusements, in pursuing them with enormous vigor, and taking them with eager seriousness, our English people are the wonder of the world. They always were. And it is just as well, for otherwise their sensuality would become morbid and destroy them. What appals me is that their amusements should amuse them. They are the amusements of boys and girls. They are pardonable up to the age of fifty or sixty after that they are ridiculous. I tell you, what is wrong with us is that we are a non-adult race, and the Irish and the Scots, and the niggers and Chinks, as you call them, though their lifetime is as short as ours, or shorter, yet do somehow contrive to grow up a little before they die. We die in boyhood, the maturity that should make us the greatest of all the nations lies beyond the grave for us. Either we shall go under as greybeards with golf clubs in our hands, or we must will to live longer.

MRS LUTESTRING Yes that is it. I could not have expressed it in words, but you have expressed it for me. I felt, even when I was an ignorant domestic slave, that we had the possibility of becoming a great nation within us, but our faults and follies drove me to cynical hopelessness. We all ended then like that. It is the highest creatures who take the longest to mature, and are the most helpless during their immaturity. I know now that it took me a whole century to grow up. I began my serious life when I was a hundred and twenty. Asiatics cannot control me. I am not a child in their hands, as you are, Mr President. Neither, I am sure, is the Archbishop. They respect me. You are not grown up enough even for that, though you were kind enough to say that I frighten you.

BURGE-LUBIN Honestly, you do. And will you think me very rude if I say that if I must choose between a white woman old enough to be my great-grandmother and a black woman of my own age, I shall probably find the black woman more sympathetic?

MRS LUTESTRING And more attractive in color, perhaps?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes. Since you ask me, more—well, not more attractive. I do not deny that you have an excellent appearance—but I will say, richer. More Venetian. Tropical.

shadowed livery of the burnished

LUTESTRING Our women, and their story writers, begin already to talk men with golden complexions

UCIUS [*expanding into a smile all across face and body*] A-a-a-a—h!

GE-LUBIN. Well, what of it, madam? You read a very interesting book by a librarian of the Biological Society suggesting that the future of the world lies with the mulatto?

LUTESTRING [*rising*] Mr Archbishop if the white race is to be saved, our destiny is in the hands of the colored people.

ARCHBISHOP. Yes, our duty is pretty plain.

LUTESTRING Have you time to come with me and discuss the matter?

ARCHBISHOP [*rising*] With pleasure.

BARNABAS [*rising also and rushing past Mrs. Lutesring to the door, where he turns to bar her*] No you dont Burge you understand, dont you?

GE-LUBIN No What is it?

BARNABAS These two are going to marry.

GE-LUBIN Why shouldnt they, if they want to?

BARNABAS They dont want to They will not marry in cold blood because their children will live three hundred years It mustnt be so.

UCIUS You cannot prevent it There is no law that gives you power to interfere with their marriage.

BARNABAS If they force me to it I will introduce legislation against marriages above the age of seventy-eight.

ARCHBISHOP. There is not time for that now. We are married, Mr Accountant General. Be good enough to get out of the room this way.

BARNABAS There is time to send the lady to the lethal chamber before anything comes of her marriage Dont forget that.

LUTESTRING What nonsense, Mr Accountant General! Good afternoon, Mr President. Good afternoon, Mr Chief Secretary. [*She rises and acknowledges her salutation with a bow. She walks straight at the Accountant General, who instinctively shrinks out of her way as she leaves the room.*]

ARCHBISHOP I am surprised at you, Mr Burge. Your tone was like an echo from the Dark Ages. [*He follows the Domestic*

Minister].

Confucius, shaking his head and clucking with his tongue in deprecation of this painful episode, moves to the chair just vacated by the Archbishop and stands behind it with folded palms, looking at the President. The Accountant General shakes his fist after the departed visitors, and bursts into savage abuse of them.

BARNABAS. Thieves! Cursed thieves! Vampires! What are you going to do, Burge?

BURGE-LUBIN. Do?

BARNABAS Yes, do. There must be dozens of these people in existence. Are you going to let them do what the two who have just left us mean to do, and crowd us off the face of the earth?

BURGE-LUBIN [*sitting down*] Oh, come, Barnabas! What harm are they doing? Arnt you interested in them? Dont you like them?

BARNABAS Like them! I hate them. They are monsters, unnatural monsters. They are poison to me.

BURGE-LUBIN What possible objection can there be to their living as long as they can? It does not shorten our lives, does it?

BARNABAS If I have to die when I am seventy-eight, I dont see why another man should be privileged to live to be two hundred and seventy-eight. It does shorten my life, relatively. It makes us ridiculous. If they grew to be twelve feet high they would make us all dwarfs. They talked to us as if we were children. There is no love lost between us: their hatred of us came out soon enough. You heard what the woman said, and how the Archbishop backed her up?

BURGE-LUBIN But what can we do to them?

BARNABAS Kill them.

BURGE-LUBIN. Nonsense!

BARNABAS Lock them up. Sterilize them somehow, anyhow.

BURGE-LUBIN. But what reason could we give?

BARNABAS What reason can you give for killing a snake? Nature tells you to do it.

BURGE-LUBIN My dear Barnabas, you are out of your mind.

BARNABAS Havnt you said that once too often already this morning?

BURGE-LUBIN. I dont believe you will carry a single soul with you.

BARNABAS I understand I know you. You think you are one of them.

CONFUCIUS. Mr Accountant General you may be one of them.

BARNABAS How dare you accuse me of such a thing? I am an honest man, not a monster I won my place in public life by demonstrating that the true expectation of human life is seventy-eight point six And I will resist any attempt to alter or upset it to the last drop of my blood if need be

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, tut tut! Come, come! Pull yourself together How can you, a descendant of the great Conrad Barnabas, the man who is still remembered by his masterly Biography of a Black Beetle, be so absurd?

BARNABAS You had better go and write the autobiography of a jackass I am going to raise the country against this horror, and against you, if you shew the slightest sign of weakness about it

CONFUCIUS [*very impressively*] You will regret it if you do

BARNABAS What is to make me regret it?

CONFUCIUS Every mortal man and woman in the community will begin to count on living for three centuries Things will happen which you do not foresee terrible things The family will dissolve parents and children will be no longer the old and the young brothers and sisters will meet as strangers after a hundred years separation the ties of blood will lose their innocence The imaginations of men, let loose over the possibilities of three centuries of life, will drive them mad and wreck human society This discovery must be kept a dead secret [*He sits down*]

BARNABAS And if I refuse to keep the secret?

CONFUCIUS I shall have you safe in a lunatic asylum the day after you blab

BARNABAS You forget that I can produce the Archbishop to prove my statement

CONFUCIUS So can I Which of us do you think he will support when I explain to him that your object in revealing his age is to get him killed?

BARNABAS [*desperate*] Burge are you going to back up this yellow abomination against me? Are we public men and members of the Government? or are we damned blackguards?

CONFUCIUS [*unmoved*] Have you ever known a public man who was not what vituperative people called a damned blackguard when some inconsiderate person wanted to tell the public more than was good for it?

BARNABAS Hold your tongue, you insolent heathen Burge I spoke to you

BURGE-LUBIN Well, you know, my dear Barnabas, Confucius is a very long-headed chap I see his point

BARNABAS Do you? Then let me tell you that, except officially, I will never speak to you again Do you hear?

BURGE-LUBIN [*cheerfully*] You will You will

BARNABAS And dont you ever dare speak to me again Do you hear? [*He turns to the door*]

BURGE-LUBIN I will I will Goodbye, Barnabas God bless you

BARNABAS May you live forever, and be the laughing-stock of the whole world! [*he dashes out in a fury*]

BURGE-LUBIN [*laughing indulgently*] He will keep the secret all right I know Barnabas You neednt worry

CONFUCIUS [*troubled and grave*] There are no secrets except the secrets that keep themselves Consider There are those films at the Record Office We have no power to prevent the Master of the Records from publishing this discovery made in his department We cannot silence the American—who can silence an American?—nor the people who were there today to receive him Fortunately, a film can prove nothing but a resemblance

BURGE-LUBIN Thats very true After all, the whole thing is confounded nonsense, isnt it?

CONFUCIUS [*raising his head to look at him*] You have decided not to believe it now that you realize its inconveniences That is the English method It may not work in this case

BURGE-LUBIN English be hanged! It's common sense You know, those two people got us hypnotized not a doubt of it They must have been kidding us They were, werent they?

CONFUCIUS You looked into that woman's face, and you believed

BURGE-LUBIN Just so Thats where she had me I shouldnt have believed her a bit if she'd turned her back to me

CONFUCIUS [*shakes his head slowly and repeatedly*]???

BURGE-LUBIN You really think—? [*he hesitates*]

CONFUCIUS The Archbishop has always been a puzzle to me Ever since I learnt to distinguish between one English face and another I have noticed what the woman pointed out that the English face is not an adult face, just as the English mind is not

an adult mind

BURGE-LUBIN Stow it, John Chinaman If ever there was a race divinely appointed to take charge of the non-adult races and guide them and train them and keep them out of mischief until they grow up to be capable of adopting our institutions, that race is the English race It is the only race in the world that has that characteristic Now!

CONFUCIUS That is the fancy of a child nursing a doll But it is ten times more childish of you to dispute the highest compliment ever paid you

BURGE-LUBIN. You call it a compliment to class us as grown-up children

CONFUCIUS Not grown-up children, children at fifty, sixty, seventy Your maturity is so late that you never attain to it You have to be governed by races which are mature at forty That means that you are potentially the most highly developed race on earth, and would be actually the greatest if you could live long enough to attain to maturity

BURGE-LUBIN [*grasping the idea at last*] By George, Confucius, youre right! I never thought of that That explains everything We are just a lot of schoolboys. theres no denying it Talk to an Englishman about anything serious, and he listens to you curiously for a moment just as he listens to a chap playing classical music Then he goes back to his marine golf, or motoring, or flying, or women, just like a bit of stretched elastic when you let it go [*Soaring to the height of his theme*] Oh, youre quite right We are only in our infancy. I ought to be in a perambulator, with a nurse shoving me along It's true: it's absolutely true But some day we'll grow up, and then, by Jungo, we'll shew em

CONFUCIUS The Archbishop is an adult When I was a child I was dominated and intimidated by people whom I now know to have been weaker and sillier than I, because there was some mysterious quality in their mere age that overawed me I confess that, though I have kept up appearances, I have always been afraid of the Archbishop.

BURGE-LUBIN. Between ourselves, Confucius, so have I

CONFUCIUS It is this that convinced me It was this in the woman's face that convinced you Their new departure in the history of the race is no fraud It does not even surprise me.

BURGE-LUBIN Oh, come! Not surprise you! It's your pose never to be surprised at anything, but if you are not surprised at this you are not human

CONFUCIUS I am staggered, just as a man may be staggered by an explosion for which he has himself laid the charge and lighted the fuse But I am not surprised, because, as a philosopher and a student of evolutionary biology, I have come to regard some such development as this as inevitable If I had not thus prepared myself to be credulous, no mere evidence of films and well-told tales would have persuaded me to believe As it is, I do believe

BURGE-LUBIN Well, that being settled, what the devil is to happen next? Whats the next move for us?

CONFUCIUS We do not make the next move. The next move will be made by the Archbishop and the woman

BURGE-LUBIN Their marriage?

CONFUCIUS. More than that They have made the momentous discovery that they are not alone in the world

BURGE-LUBIN You think there are others?

CONFUCIUS There must be many others. Each of them believes that he or she is the only one to whom the miracle has happened But the Archbishop knows better now He will advertize in terms which only the long-lived people will understand He will bring them together and organize them They will hasten from all parts of the earth They will become a great Power

BURGE-LUBIN [*a little alarmed*] I say, will they? I suppose they will I wonder is Barnabas right after all? Ought we to allow it?

CONFUCIUS Nothing that we can do will stop it We cannot in our souls really want to stop it the vital force that has produced this change would paralyse our opposition to it, if we were mad enough to oppose But we will not oppose You and I may be of the elect, too.

BURGE-LUBIN Yes thats what gets us every time What the deuce ought we to do? Something must be done about it, you know

CONFUCIUS Let us sit still, and meditate in silence on the vistas before us.

BURGE-LUBIN. By George, I believe youre right Let us

They sit meditating, the Chinaman naturally, the President with visible effort and intensity He is positively glaring into the future when the voice

of the Negress is heard

THE NEGRESS Mr President

BURGE-LUBIN [*joyfully*] Yes [*Taking up a peg*] Are you at home?

THE NEGRESS No Omega, zero, \ squared

The President rapidly puts the peg in the switchboard, works the dial, and presses the button. The screen becomes transparent, and the Negress, brilliantly dressed, appears on what looks like the bridge of a steam yacht in glorious sea weather. The installation with which she is communicating is beside the binnacle

CONFUCIUS [*looking round, and recoiling with a shriek of disgust*] Ah! Avaunt! Avaunt! [*He rushes from the room*]

BURGE-LUBIN What part of the coast is that?

THE NEGRESS Fishguard Bay Why not run over and join me for the afternoon? I am disposed to be approachable at last

BURGE-LUBIN But Fishguard! Two hundred and seventy miles!

THE NEGRESS There is a lightning express on the Irish Air Service at half-past sixteen. They will drop you by a parachute in the bay. The dip will do you good. I will pick you up and dry you and give you a first-rate time.

BURGE-LUBIN Delightful. But a little risky, isn't it?

THE NEGRESS Risky! I thought you were afraid of nothing.

BURGE-LUBIN I am not exactly afraid, but—

THE NEGRESS [*offended*] But you think it is not good enough. Very well [*she raises her hand to take the peg out of her switchboard*]

BURGE-LUBIN [*imploringly*] No stop let me explain hold the line just one moment. Oh, please

THE NEGRESS [*waiting with her hand poised over the peg*] Well?

BURGE-LUBIN The fact is, I have been behaving very recklessly for some time past under the impression that my life would be so short that it was not worth bothering about. But I have just learnt that I may live—well, much longer than I expected. I am sure your good sense will tell you that this alters the case. I—

THE NEGRESS [*with suppressed rage*] Oh, quite. Pray don't risk your precious life on my account. Sorry for troubling you. Good-bye [*She snatches out her peg and vanishes*]

BURGE-LUBIN [*urgently*] No please hold on. I can convince you—[*a loud buzz-uzz-uzz*] Engaged! Who is she calling up now? [*He*

presses the button and calls] The Chief Secretary. Say I want to see him again, just for a moment.

CONFUCIUS'S VOICE Is the woman gone?

BURGE-LUBIN Yes, yes it's all right. Just a moment, if—[*Confucius returns*] Confucius. I have some important business at Fishguard. The Irish Air Service can drop me in the bay by parachute. I suppose it's quite safe, isn't it?

CONFUCIUS Nothing is quite safe. The air service is as safe as any other travelling service. The parachute is safe. But the water is not safe.

BURGE-LUBIN Why? They will give me an unsinkable tunic, won't they?

CONFUCIUS You will not sink, but the sea is very cold. You may get rheumatism for life.

BURGE-LUBIN For life! That settles it. I won't risk it.

CONFUCIUS Good. You have at last become prudent. You are no longer what you call a sportsman. You are a sensible coward, almost a grown-up man. I congratulate you.

BURGE-LUBIN [*resolutely*] Coward or no coward, I will not face an eternity of rheumatism for any woman that ever was born. [*He rises and goes to the rack for his fillet*] I have changed my mind. I am going home. [*He cocks the fillet rakishly*] Good evening.

CONFUCIUS So early? If the Minister of Health rings you up, what shall I tell her?

BURGE-LUBIN Tell her to go to the devil. [*He goes out*]

CONFUCIUS [*shaking his head, shocked at the President's impoliteness*] No. No, no, no, no, no. Oh, these English! these crude young civilizations! Their manners! Hogs. Hogs.

PART IV

TRAGEDY OF AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

ACT I

Burrin pier on the south shore of Galway Bay in Ireland, a region of stone-capped hills and granite fields. It is a fine summer day in the year 3000 A.D. On an ancient stone stump, about three feet thick and three feet high, used for securing ships by ropes to the shore, and called a bollard or holdfast, an elderly gentleman sits facing the land, with his head bowed and his face in his hands, sobbing. His sunburnt skin contrasts with

his white whiskers and eyebrows He wears a black frock-coat, a white waistcoat, lavender trousers, a brilliant silk cravat with a jewelled pin stuck in it, a tall hat of grey felt, and patent leather boots with white spats His starched linen cuffs protrude from his coat sleeves; and his collar, also of starched white linen, is Gladstonian On his right, three or four full sacks, lying side by side on the flags, suggest that the pier, unlike many remote Irish piers, is occasionally useful as well as romantic On his left, behind him, a flight of stone steps descends out of sight to the sea level

A woman in a silk tunic and sandals, wearing little else except a cap with the number 2 on it in gold, comes up the steps from the sea, and stares in astonishment at the sobbing man Her age cannot be guessed her face is firm and chiselled like a young face, but her expression is unyouthful in its severity and determination.

THE WOMAN What is the matter?

The elderly gentleman looks up; hastily pulls himself together, takes out a silk handkerchief and dries his tears lightly with a brave attempt to smile through them, and tries to rise gallantly, but sinks back.

THE WOMAN. Do you need assistance?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN No Thank you very much No Nothing The heat [He punctuates with sniffs, and dabs with his handkerchief at his eyes and nose] Hay fever

THE WOMAN You are a foreigner, are you not?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN No You must not regard me as a foreigner I am a Briton

THE WOMAN You come from some part of the British Commonwealth?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [amiably pompous] From its capital, madam

THE WOMAN From Baghdad?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Yes. You may not be aware, madam, that these islands were once the centre of the British Commonwealth, during a period now known as The Exile They were its headquarters a thousand years ago Few people know this interesting circumstance now, but I assure you it is true. I have come here on a pious pilgrimage to one of the numerous lands of my fathers We are of the same stock. you and I. Blood is thicker than water We are cousins.

THE WOMAN I do not understand You say you have come here on a pious pilgrimage. Is that some new means of transport?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [again shewing

signs of distress] I find it very difficult to make myself understood here I was not referring to a machine, but to a—a—a sentimental journey.

THE WOMAN I am afraid I am as much in the dark as before. You said also that blood is thicker than water No doubt it is; but what of it?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Its meaning is obvious

THE WOMAN Perfectly. But I assure you I am quite aware that blood is thicker than water

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [sniffing almost in tears again] We will leave it at that, madam

THE WOMAN [going nearer to him and scrutinizing him with some concern] I am afraid you are not well Were you not warned that it is dangerous for shortlived people to come to this country? There is a deadly disease called discouragement, against which shortlived people have to take very strict precautions. Intercourse with us puts too great a strain on them

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [pulling himself together huffily] It has no effect on me, madam I fear my conversation does not interest you. If not, the remedy is in your own hands

THE WOMAN [looking at her hands, and then looking inquiringly at him] Where?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [breaking down] Oh, this is dreadful No understanding, no intelligence, no sympathy—[his sobs choke him]

THE WOMAN You see, you are ill

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [nerved by indignation] I am not ill I have never had a day's illness in my life.

THE WOMAN. May I advise you?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. I have no need of a lady doctor, thank you, madam

THE WOMAN [shaking her head] I am afraid I do not understand I said nothing about a butterfly.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Well, I said nothing about a butterfly

THE WOMAN You spoke of a lady doctor. The word is known here only as the name of a butterfly.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [insanely] I give up. I can bear this no longer It is easier to go out of my mind at once. [He rises and dances about, singing]

I'd be a butterfly, born in a bower,
Making apple dumplings without any flour.

THE WOMAN [*smiling gravely*] It must be at least a hundred and fifty years since I last laughed But if you do that any more I shall certainly break out like a primary of sixty Your dress is so extraordinarily ridiculous

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*halting abruptly in his antics*] My dress ridiculous! I may not be dressed like a Foreign Office clerk, but my clothes are perfectly in fashion in my native metropolis, where yours—pardon my saying so—would be considered extremely unusual and hardly decent.

THE WOMAN Decent? There is no such word in our language What does it mean?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN It would not be decent for me to explain Decency cannot be discussed without indecency

THE WOMAN I cannot understand you at all I fear you have not been observing the rules laid down for shortlived visitors

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Surely, madam, they do not apply to persons of my age and standing I am not a child, nor an agricultural laborer

THE WOMAN [*severely*] They apply to you very strictly You are expected to confine yourself to the society of children under sixty You are absolutely forbidden to approach fully adult natives under any circumstances You cannot converse with persons of my age for long without bringing on a dangerous attack of discouragement Do you realize that you are already shewing grave symptoms of that very distressing and usually fatal complaint?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Certainly not, madam I am fortunately in no danger of contracting it I am quite accustomed to converse intimately and at the greatest length with the most distinguished persons If you cannot discriminate between hay fever and imbecility, I can only say that your advanced years carry with them the inevitable penalty of dotage

THE WOMAN I am one of the guardians of this district, and I am responsible for your welfare—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN The Guardians! Do you take me for a pauper?

THE WOMAN I do not know what a pauper is You must tell me who you are, if it is possible for you to express yourself intelligibly—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*snorts indignantly*]!

THE WOMAN [*continuing*]—and why you are

wandering here alone without a nurse

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*outraged*] Nurse!

THE WOMAN Shortlived visitors are not allowed to go about here without nurses Do you not know that rules are meant to be kept?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN By the lower classes, no doubt But to persons in my position there are certain courtesies which are never denied by well-bred people, and—

THE WOMAN There are only two human classes here the shortlived and the normal The rules apply to the shortlived, and are for their own protection Now tell me at once who you are

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*impressively*] Madam, I am a retired gentleman, formerly Chairman of the All-British Synthetic Egg and Vegetable Cheese Trust in Baghdad, and now President of the British Historical and Archaeological Society, and a Vice-President of the Travellers' Club

THE WOMAN All that does not matter

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*again snorting*] Hm! Indeed!

THE WOMAN Have you been sent here to make your mind flexible?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN What an extraordinary question! Pray do you find my mind noticeably stiff?

THE WOMAN Perhaps you do not know that you are on the west coast of Ireland, and that it is the practice among natives of the Eastern Island to spend some years here to acquire mental flexibility The climate has that effect.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*haughtily*] I was born, not in the Eastern Island, but, thank God, in dear old British Baghdad, and I am not in need of a mental health resort.

THE WOMAN Then why are you here?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Am I trespassing? I was not aware of it

THE WOMAN Trespassing? I do not understand the word.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Is this land private property? If so, I make no claim I proffer a shilling in satisfaction of damage (if any), and am ready to withdraw if you will be good enough to shew me the nearest way [*He offers her a shilling*]

THE WOMAN [*taking it and examining it without much interest*] I do not understand a single word of what you have just said

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I am speaking the

plainest English. Are you the landlord?

THE WOMAN [*shaking her head*] There is a tradition in this part of the country of an animal with a name like that. It used to be hunted and shot in the barbarous ages. It is quite extinct now.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*breaking down again*] It is a dreadful thing to be in a country where nobody understands civilized institutions [*He collapses on the bollard, struggling with his rising sobs*] Excuse me. Hay fever.

THE WOMAN [*taking a tuning-fork from her girdle and holding it to her ear, then speaking into space on one note, like a chorister intoning a psalm*] Burrin Pier Galway please send someone to take charge of a discouraged short-liver who has escaped from his nurse male harmless babbles unintelligibly with moments of sense distressed hysterical foreign dress very funny has curious fringe of white seaweed under his chin.

THE GENTLEMAN. This is a gross impertinence. An insult.

THE WOMAN [*replacing her tuning-fork and addressing the elderly gentleman*] These words mean nothing to me. In what capacity are you here? How did you obtain permission to visit us?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*importantly*] Our Prime Minister, Mr Badger Bluebin, has come to consult the oracle. He is my son-in-law. We are accompanied by his wife and daughter my daughter and granddaughter. I may mention that General Aufsteig, who is one of our party, is really the Emperor of Turania travelling incognito. I understand he has a question to put to the oracle informally. I have come solely to visit the country.

THE WOMAN. Why should you come to a place where you have no business?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Great Heavens, madam, can anything be more natural? I shall be the only member of the Travellers' Club who has set foot on these shores. Think of that! My position will be unique.

THE WOMAN. Is that an advantage? We have a person here who has lost both legs in an accident. His position is unique. But he would much rather be like everyone else.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. This is maddening. There is no analogy whatever between the two cases.

THE WOMAN. They are both unique.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Conversation in this place seems to consist of ridiculous

quibbles. I am heartily tired of them.

THE WOMAN. I conclude that your Travellers' Club is an assembly of persons who wish to be able to say that they have been in some place where nobody else has been.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Of course if you wish to sneer at us—

THE WOMAN. What is sneer?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*with a wild sob*] I shall drown myself.

He makes desperately for the edge of the pier, but is confronted by a man with the number one on his cap, who comes up the steps and intercepts him. He is dressed like the woman, but a slight moustache proclaims his sex.

THE MAN [*to the elderly gentleman*] Ah, here you are. I shall really have to put a collar and lead on you if you persist in giving me the slip like this.

THE WOMAN. Are you this stranger's nurse?

THE MAN. Yes. I am very tired of him. If I take my eyes off him for a moment, he runs away and talks to everybody.

THE WOMAN [*after taking out her tuning-fork and sounding it, intones as before*] Burrin Pier. Wash out. [*She puts up the fork, and addresses the man*] I sent a call for someone to take care of him. I have been trying to talk to him; but I can understand very little of what he says. You must take better care of him: he is badly discouraged already. If I can be of any further use, Fusima, Gort, will find me. [*She goes away*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Any further use! She has been of no use to me. She spoke to me without any introduction, like any improper female. And she has made off with my shilling.

THE MAN. Please speak slowly: I cannot follow. What is a shilling? What is an introduction? Improper female doesn't make sense.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Nothing seems to make sense here. All I can tell you is that she was the most impenetrably stupid woman I have ever met in the whole course of my life.

THE MAN. That cannot be. She cannot appear stupid to you. She is a secondary, and getting on for a tertiary at that.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. What is a tertiary? Everybody here keeps talking to me about primaries and secondaries and tertiaries as if people were geological strata.

THE MAN. The primaries are in their first century. The secondaries are in their second

century I am still classed as a primary [*he points to his number*], but I may almost call myself a secondary, as I shall be ninety-five next January The tertiaries are in their third century Did you not see the number two on her badge? She is an advanced secondary

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN That accounts for it She is in her second childhood.

THE MAN Her second childhood! She is in her fifth childhood

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*again resorting to the bollard*] Oh! I cannot bear these unnatural arrangements

THE MAN [*impatient and helpless*] You shouldnt have come among us This is no place for you

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*nerved by indignation*] May I ask why? I am a Vice-President of the Travellers' Club I have been everywhere. I hold the record in the Club for civilized countries

THE MAN What is a civilized country?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN It is—well, it is a civilized country [*Desperately*] I dont know I—I—I—I shall go mad if you keep on asking me to tell you things that everybody knows Countries where you can travel comfortably Where there are good hotels Excuse me, but, though you say you are ninety-four, you are worse company than a child of five with your eternal questions Why not call me Daddy at once?

THE MAN I did not know your name was Daddy

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN My name is Joseph Popham Bolge Bluebin Barlow, O M

THE MAN That is five men's names Daddy is shorter And O M will not do here It is our name for certain wild creatures, descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of this coast They used to be called the O'Mulligans We will stick to Daddy

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN People will think I am your father

THE MAN [*shocked*] Sh-sh! People here never allude to such relationships It is not quite delicate, is it? What does it matter whether you are my father or not?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN My worthy nonagenarian friend your faculties are totally decayed. Could you not find me a guide of my own age?

THE MAN A young person?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Certainly not I

cannot go about with a young person

THE MAN Why?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Why! Why!! Why!!! Have you no moral sense?

THE MAN I shall have to give you up I cannot understand you

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN But you meant a young woman, didnt you?

THE MAN I meant simply somebody of your own age What difference does it make whether the person is a man or a woman?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I could not have believed in the existence of such scandalous insensibility to the elementary decencies of human intercourse

THE MAN What are decencies?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*shrieking*] Everyone asks me that

THE MAN [*taking out a tuning-fork and using it as the woman did*] Zozim on Burrin Pier to Zoo Ennistymon I have found the discouraged shortliver he has been talking to a secondary and is much worse I am too old he is asking for someone of his own age or younger come if you can [*He puts up his fork and turns to the elderly gentleman*] Zoo is a girl of fifty, and rather childish at that. So perhaps she may make you happy

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Make me happy! A bluestocking of fifty! Thank you

THE MAN Bluestocking? The effort to make out your meaning is fatiguing Besides, you are talking too much to me I am old enough to discourage you Let us be silent until Zoo comes [*He turns his back on the elderly gentleman, and sits down on the edge of the pier, with his legs dangling over the water*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Certainly I have no wish to force my conversation on any man who does not desire it Perhaps you would like to take a nap If so, pray do not stand on ceremony

THE MAN What is a nap?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*exasperated, going to him and speaking with great precision and distinctness*] A nap, my friend, is a brief period of sleep which overtakes superannuated persons when they endeavor to entertain unwelcome visitors or to listen to scientific lectures Sleep Sleep [*Bawling into his ear*] Sleep

THE MAN I tell you I am nearly a secondary I never sleep

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*awestruck*] Good Heavens!

A young woman with the number one on her cap arrives by land. She looks no older than Savvy Barnabas, whom she somewhat resembles, looked a thousand years before. Younger, if anything.

THE YOUNG WOMAN Is this the patient?

THE MAN [*scrambling up*] This is Zoo [*To Zoo*] Call him Daddy

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*vehemently*] No

THE MAN [*ignoring the interruption*] Bless you for taking him off my hands! I have had as much of him as I can bear [*He goes down the steps and disappears*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*ironically taking off his hat and making a sweeping bow from the edge of the pier in the direction of the Atlantic Ocean*] Good afternoon, sir, and thank you very much for your extraordinary politeness, your exquisite consideration for my feelings, your courtly manners. Thank you from the bottom of my heart [*Clapping his hat on again*] Pig! Ass!

zoo [*laughs very heartily at him*]¹¹¹

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*turning sharply on her*] Good afternoon, madam. I am sorry to have had to put your friend in his place, but I find that here as elsewhere it is necessary to assert myself if I am to be treated with proper consideration. I had hoped that my position as a guest would protect me from insult.

zoo. Putting my friend in his place. That is some poetic expression, is it not? What does it mean?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Pray, is there no one in these islands who understands plain English?

zoo Well, nobody except the oracles. They have to make a special historical study of what we call the dead thought.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Dead thought! I have heard of the dead languages, but never of the dead thought.

zoo Well, thoughts die sooner than languages. I understand your language, but I do not always understand your thought. The oracles will understand you perfectly. Have you had your consultation yet?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. I did not come to consult the oracle, madam. I am here simply as a gentleman travelling for pleasure in the company of my daughter, who is the wife of the British Prime Minister, and of General Aufsteig, who, I may tell you in confidence, is really the Emperor of Turania, the greatest

military genius of the age.

zoo Why should you travel for pleasure? Can you not enjoy yourself at home?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I wish to see the world.

zoo It is too big. You can see a bit of it anywhere.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*out of patience*] Damn it, madam, you don't want to spend your life looking at the same bit of it! [*Checking himself*] I beg your pardon for swearing in your presence.

zoo Oh! That is swearing, is it? I have read about that. It sounds quite pretty. Dammitmaddam, dammitmaddam, dammitmaddam, dammitmaddam. Say it as often as you please. I like it.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*expanding with intense relief*] Bless you for those profane but familiar words! Thank you, thank you. For the first time since I landed in this terrible country I begin to feel at home. The strain which was driving me mad relaxes. I feel almost as if I were at the club. Excuse my taking the only available seat. I am not so young as I was [*He sits on the bollard*]. Promise me that you will not hand me over to one of these dreadful tertiaries or secondaries or whatever you call them.

zoo Never fear. They had no business to give you in charge to Zozm. You see he is just on the verge of becoming a secondary, and these adolescents will give themselves the airs of tertiaries. You naturally feel more at home with a flapper like me [*She makes herself comfortable on the sacks*].

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Flapper? What does that mean?

zoo It is an archaic word which we still use to describe a female who is no longer a girl and is not yet quite adult.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. A very agreeable age to associate with, I find. I am recovering rapidly. I have a sense of blossoming like a flower. May I ask your name?

zoo. Zoo.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Miss Zoo.

zoo. Not Miss Zoo. Zoo.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Precisely. Er—Zoo what?

zoo No. Not Zoo. What Zoo. Nothing but Zoo.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*puzzled*] Mrs Zoo, perhaps.

zoo. No. Zoo. Can't you catch it? Zoo.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Of course Believe me, I did not really think you were married you are obviously too young, but here it is so hard to feel sure—er—

zoo [*hopelessly puzzled*] What?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Marriage makes a difference, you know One can say things to a married lady that would perhaps be in questionable taste to anyone without that experience

zoo You are getting out of my depth I dont understand a word you are saying Married and questionable taste convey nothing to me. Stop, though Is married an old form of the word mothered?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Very likely Let us drop the subject Pardon me for embarrassing you I should not have mentioned it

zoo What does embarrassing mean?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Well, really! I should have thought that so natural and common a condition would be understood as long as human nature lasted. To embarrass is to bring a blush to the cheek

zoo What is a blush?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*amazed*] Dont you blush???

zoo Never heard of it We have a word flush, meaning a rush of blood to the skin I have noticed it in my babies, but not after the age of two

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Your babies!!! I fear I am treading on very delicate ground, but your appearance is extremely youthful, and if I may ask how many—?

zoo Only four as yet It is a long business with us I specialize in babies My first was such a success that they made me go on I—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*reeling on the bollard*] Oh! dear!

zoo Whats the matter? Anything wrong?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN In Heaven's name, madam, how old are you?

zoo Fifty-six

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN My knees are trembling I fear I am really ill Not so young as I was

zoo I noticed that you are not strong on your legs yet You have many of the ways and weaknesses of a baby No doubt that is why I feel called on to mother you You certainly are a very silly little Daddy

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*stimulated by indignation*] My name, I repeat, is Joseph Popham Bolge Bluebin Barlow, O M

zoo What a ridiculously long name! I cant call you all that What did your mother call you?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN You recall the bitterest struggles of my childhood. I was sensitive on the point Children suffer greatly from absurd nicknames My mother thoughtlessly called me Iddy Toodles I was called Iddy until I went to school, when I made my first stand for children's rights by insisting on being called at least Joe At fifteen I refused to answer to anything shorter than Joseph At eighteen I discovered that the name Joseph was supposed to indicate an unmanly prudery because of some old story about a Joseph who rejected the advances of his employer's wife very properly in my opinion I then became Popham to my family and intimate friends, and Mister Barlow to the rest of the world My mother shipped back into Iddy when her faculties began to fail her, poor woman, but I could not resent that, at her age

zoo Do you mean to say that your mother bothered about you after you were ten?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Naturally, madam. She was my mother What would you have had her do?

zoo Go on to the next, of course After eight or nine children become quite uninteresting, except to themselves I shouldnt know my two eldest if I met them

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*again drooping*] I am dying Let me die I wish to die

zoo [*going to him quickly and supporting him*] Hold up Sit up straight Whats the matter?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*faintly*] My spine, I think. Shock Concussion

zoo [*maternally*] Pow wow wow! What is there to shock you? [*Shaking him playfully*] There! Sit up, and be good

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*stall feebly*] Thank you I am better now

zoo [*resuming her seat on the sacks*] But what was all the rest of that long name for? There was a lot more of it Blops Booby or something

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*impressively*] Bolge Bluebin, madam a historical name Let me inform you that I can trace my family back for more than a thousand years, from the Eastern Empire to its ancient seat in these islands, to a time when two of my ancestors, Joyce Bolge and Hengist, Horsa Bluebin, wrestled with one another for the prime ministership of the British Empire,

and occupied that position successively with a glory of which we can in these degenerate days form but a faint conception. When I think of these mighty men, lions in war, sages in peace, not babblers and charlatans like the pigmies who now occupy their places in Baghdad, but strong silent men, ruling an empire on which the sun never set, my eyes fill with tears, my heart bursts with emotion. I feel that to have lived but to the dawn of manhood in their day, and then died for them, would have been a nobler and happier lot than the ignominious ease of my present longevity.

zoo Longevity! [*she laughs*].

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Yes, madam, relative longevity. As it is, I have to be content and proud to know that I am descended from both those heroes.

zoo You must be descended from every Briton who was alive in their time. Don't you know that?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Do not quibble, madam. I bear their names, Bolge and Bluebin; and I hope I have inherited something of their majestic spirit. Well, they were born in these islands. I repeat, these islands were then, incredible as it now seems, the centre of the British Empire. When that centre shifted to Baghdad, and the Englishman at last returned to the true cradle of his race in Mesopotamia, the western islands were cast off, as they had been before by the Roman Empire. But it was to the British race, and in these islands, that the greatest miracle in history occurred.

zoo Miracle?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Yes: the first man to live three hundred years was an Englishman. The first, that is, since the contemporaries of Methuselah.

zoo Oh, that!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Yes, that, as you call it so flippantly. Are you aware, madam, that at that immortal moment the English race had lost intellectual credit to such an extent that they habitually spoke of one another as fatheads? Yet England is now a sacred grove to which statesmen from all over the earth come to consult English sages who speak with the experience of two and a half centuries of life. The land that once exported cotton shirts and hardware now exports nothing but wisdom. You see before you, madam, a man utterly weary of the

week-end riverside hotels of the Euphrates, the minstrels and pierrots on the sands of the Persian Gulf, the toboggans and funiculars of the Hindoo Koosh. Can you wonder that I turn, with a hungry heart, to the mystery and beauty of these haunted islands, thronged with spectres from a magic past, made holy by the footsteps of the wise men of the West. Consider this island on which we stand, the last foothold of man on this side of the Atlantic: this Ireland, described by the earliest bards as an emerald gem set in a silver sea! Can I, a scion of the illustrious British race, ever forget that when the Empire transferred its seat to the East, and said to the turbulent Irish race which it had oppressed but never conquered, "At last we leave you to yourselves, and much good may it do you," the Irish as one man uttered the historic shout "No, we'll be damned if you do," and emigrated to the countries where there was still a Nationalist question, to India, Persia, and Corea, to Morocco, Tunis, and Tripoli. In these countries they were ever foremost in the struggle for national independence; and the world rang continually with the story of their sufferings and wrongs. And what poem can do justice to the end, when it came at last? Hardly two hundred years had elapsed when the claims of nationality were so universally conceded that there was no longer a single country on the face of the earth with a national grievance or a national movement. Think of the position of the Irish, who had lost all their political faculties by disuse except that of nationalist agitation, and who owed their position as the most interesting race on earth solely to their sufferings! The very countries they had helped to set free boycotted them as intolerable bores. The communities which had once idolized them as the incarnation of all that is adorable in the warm heart and witty brain, fled from them as from a pestilence. To regain their lost prestige, the Irish claimed the city of Jerusalem, on the ground that they were the lost tribes of Israel; but on their approach the Jews abandoned the city and redistributed themselves throughout Europe. It was then that these devoted Irishmen, not one of whom had ever seen Ireland, were counselled by an English Archbishop, the father of the oracles, to go back to their own country. This had never once occurred to them, because there was nothing to prevent

them and nobody to forbid them They jumped at the suggestion They landed here here in Galway Bay, on this very ground Then they reached the shore the older men and women flung themselves down and passionately kissed the soil of Ireland, calling on the young to embrace the earth that had borne their ancestors But the young looked gloomily on, and said "There is no earth, only stone " You will see by looking round you why they said that the fields here are of stone the hills are capped with granite They all left for England next day, and no Irishman ever again confessed to being Irish, even to his own children, so that when that generation passed away the Irish race vanished from human knowledge And the dispersed Jews did the same lest they should be sent back to Palestine Since then the world, bereft of its Jews and its Irish, has been a tame dull place Is there no pathos for you in this story? Can you not understand now why I am come to visit the scene of this tragic effacement of a race of heroes and poets?

zoo We still tell our little children stories like that, to help them to understand But such things do not happen really That scene of the Irish landing here and kissing the ground might have happened to a hundred people It couldnt have happened to a hundred thousand you know that as well as I do And what a ridiculous thing to call people Irish because they live in Ireland! you might as well call them Ayrish because they live in air They must be just the same as other people Why do you shortlivers persist in making up silly stories about the world and trying to act as if they were true? Contact with truth hurts and frightens you you escape from it into an imaginary vacuum in which you can indulge your desires and hopes and loves and hates without any obstruction from the solid facts of life You love to throw dust in your own eyes

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN It is my turn now, madam, to inform you that I do not understand a single word you are saying I should have thought that the use of a vacuum for removing dust was a mark of civilization rather than of savagery

zoo [*giving him up as hopeless*] Oh, Daddy, Daddy I can hardly believe that you are human, you are so stupid It was well said of your people in the olden days, "Dust thou

art, and to dust thou shalt return "

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*nobly*] My body is dust, madam not my soul What does it matter what my body is made of? the dust of the ground, the particles of the air, or even the slime of the ditch? The important thing is that when my Creator took it, whatever it was, He breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and Man became a living soul Yes, madam, a living soul I am not the dust of the ground I am a living soul That is an exalting, a magnificent thought It is also a great scientific fact I am not interested in the chemicals and the microbes I leave them to the chumps and noodles, to the blockheads and the muckrakers who are incapable of their own glorious destiny, and unconscious of their own divinity They tell me there are leucocytes in my blood, and sodium and carbon in my flesh I thank them for the information, and tell them that there are black-beetles in my kitchen, washing soda in my laundry, and coal in my cellar I do not deny their existence, but I keep them in their proper place, which is not, if I may be allowed to use an antiquated form of expression, the temple of the Holy Ghost No doubt you think me behind the times, but I rejoice in my enlightenment, and I recoil from your ignorance, your blindness, your imbecility Humanly I pity you Intellectually I despise you

zoo Bravo, Daddy! You have the root of the matter in you You will not die of discouragement after all

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I have not the smallest intention of doing so, madam I am no longer young, and I have moments of weakness, but when I approach this subject the divine spark in me kindles and glows, the corruptible becomes incorruptible, and the mortal Bolge Bluebin Barlow puts on immortality On this ground I am your equal, even if you survive me by ten thousand years

zoo Yes, but what do we know about this breath of life that puffs you up so exaltingly? Just nothing So let us shake hands as cultivated Agnostics, and change the subject

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Cultivated fiddlesticks, madam! You cannot change this subject until the heavens and the earth pass away I am not an Agnostic I am a gentleman When I believe a thing I say I believe it when I dont believe it I say I dont believe it I do not shirk my responsibilities by pre-

tending that I know nothing and therefore can believe nothing. We cannot disclaim knowledge and shirk responsibility. We must proceed on assumptions of some sort or we cannot form a human society.

zoo The assumptions must be scientific, Daddy. We must live by science in the long run.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I have the utmost respect, madam, for the magnificent discoveries which we owe to science. But any fool can make a discovery. Every baby has to discover more in the first years of its life than Roger Bacon ever discovered in his laboratory. When I was seven years old I discovered the sting of the wasp. But I do not ask you to worship me on that account. I assure you, madam, the merest mediocrities can discover the most surprising facts about the physical universe as soon as they are civilized enough to have time to study these things, and to invent instruments and apparatus for research. But what is the consequence? Their discoveries discredit the simple stories of our religion. At first we had no idea of astronomical space. We believed the sky to be only the ceiling of a room as large as the earth, with another room on top of it. Death was to us a going upstairs into that room, or, if we did not obey the priests, going downstairs into the coal cellar. We founded our religion, our morality, our laws, our lessons, our poems, our prayers, on that simple belief. Well, the moment men became astronomers and made telescopes, their belief perished. When they could no longer believe in the sky, they found that they could no longer believe in their Deity, because they had always thought of him as living in the sky. When the priests themselves ceased to believe in their Deity and began to believe in astronomy, they changed their name and their dress, and called themselves doctors and men of science. They set up a new religion in which there was no Deity, but only wonders and miracles, with scientific instruments and apparatus as the wonder workers. Instead of worshipping the greatness and wisdom of the Deity, men gaped foolishly at the million billion miles of space and worshipped the astronomer as infallible and omniscient. They built temples for his telescopes. Then they looked into their own bodies with microscopes, and found there; not the soul they had formerly believed in,

but millions of micro-organisms; so they gaped at these as foolishly as at the millions of miles, and built microscope temples in which horrible sacrifices were offered. They even gave their own bodies to be sacrificed by the microscope man, who was worshipped, like the astronomer, as infallible and omniscient. Thus our discoveries, instead of increasing our wisdom, only destroyed the little childish wisdom we had. All I can grant you is that they increased our knowledge.

zoo Nonsense! Consciousness of a fact is not knowledge of it. If it were, the fish would know more of the sea than the geographers and the naturalists.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN That is an extremely acute remark, madam. The dullest fish could not possibly know less of the majesty of the ocean than many geographers and naturalists of my acquaintance.

zoo Just so. And the greatest fool on earth, by merely looking at a mariners' compass, may become conscious of the fact that the needle turns always to the pole. Is he any the less a fool with that consciousness than he was without it?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Only a more conceited one, madam, no doubt. Still, I do not quite see how you can be aware of the existence of a thing without knowing it.

zoo Well, you can see a man without knowing him, can you not?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*illuminated*] Oh how true! Of course, of course. There is a member of the Travellers' Club who has questioned the veracity of an experience of mine at the South Pole. I see that man almost every day when I am at home. But I refuse to know him.

zoo. If you could see him much more distinctly through a magnifying glass, or examine a drop of his blood through a microscope, or dissect out all his organs and analyze them chemically, would you know him then?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Certainly not. Any such investigation could only increase the disgust with which he inspires me, and make me more determined than ever not to know him on any terms.

zoo Yet you would be much more conscious of him, would you not?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I should not allow that to commit me to any familiarity with the fellow. I have been twice at the Summer Sports at the South Pole, and this man pre-

tended he had been to the North Pole, which can hardly be said to exist, as it is in the middle of the sea. He declared he had hung his hat on it.

zoo [*laughing*] He knew that travellers are amusing only when they are telling lies. Perhaps if you looked at that man through a microscope you would find some good in him.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I do not want to find any good in him. Besides, madam, what you have just said encourages me to utter an opinion of mine which is so advanced! so intellectually daring! that I have never ventured to confess to it before, lest I should be imprisoned for blasphemy, or even burnt alive.

zoo Indeed! What opinion is that?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*after looking cautiously round*] I do not approve of microscopes. I never have.

zoo You call that advanced! Oh, Daddy, that is pure obscurantism.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Call it so if you will, madam, but I maintain that it is dangerous to shew too much to people who do not know what they are looking at. I think that a man who is sane as long as he looks at the world through his own eyes is very likely to become a dangerous madman if he takes to looking at the world through telescopes and microscopes. Even when he is telling fairy stories about giants and dwarfs, the giants had better not be too big nor the dwarfs too small and too malicious. Before the microscope came, our fairy stories only made the children's flesh creep pleasantly, and did not frighten grown-up persons at all. But the microscope men terrified themselves and everyone else out of their wits with the invisible monsters they saw: poor harmless little things that die at the touch of a ray of sunshine, and are themselves the victims of all the diseases they are supposed to produce! Whatever the scientific people may say, imagination without microscopes was kindly and often courageous, because it worked on things of which it had some real knowledge. But imagination with microscopes, working on a terrifying spectacle of millions of grotesque creatures of whose nature it had no knowledge, became a cruel, terror-stricken, persecuting delirium. Are you aware, madam, that a general massacre of men of science took place in the twenty-first century of the pseudo-Christian era, when all their laboratories were demolished, and all their appa-

tus destroyed?

zoo Yes, the shortlived are as savage in their advances as in their relapses. But when Science crept back, it had been taught its place. The mere collectors of anatomical or chemical facts were not supposed to know more about Science than the collector of used postage stamps about international trade or literature. The scientific terrorist who was afraid to use a spoon or a tumbler until he had dipped it in some poisonous acid to kill the microbes, was no longer given titles, pensions, and monstrous powers over the bodies of other people. He was sent to an asylum, and treated there until his recovery. But all that is an old story: the extension of life to three hundred years has provided the human race with capable leaders, and made short work of such childish stuff.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*pettishly*] You seem to credit every advance in civilization to your inordinately long lives. Do you not know that this question was familiar to men who died before they had reached my own age?

zoo Oh yes, one or two of them hunted at it in a feeble way. An ancient writer whose name has come down to us in several forms, such as Shakespear, Shelley, Sheridan, and Shoddy, has a remarkable passage about your dispositions being horridly shaken by thoughts beyond the reaches of your souls. That does not come to much, does it?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN At all events, madam, I may remind you, if you come to capping ages, that whatever your secondaries and tertiaries may be, you are younger than I am.

zoo Yes, Daddy, but it is not the number of years we have behind us, but the number we have before us, that makes us careful and responsible and determined to find out the truth about everything. What does it matter to you whether anything is true or not? Your flesh is as grass: you come up like a flower, and wither in your second childhood. A he will last your time: it will not last mine. If I knew I had to die in twenty years it would not be worth my while to educate myself. I should not bother about anything but having a little pleasure while I lasted.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Young woman! you are mistaken. Shortlived as we are, we—the best of us, I mean—regard civilization and learning, art and science as an ever-burning torch, which passes from the hand

of one generation to the hand of the next, each generation kindling it to a brighter, prouder flame Thus each lifetime, however short, contributes a brick to a vast and growing edifice, a page to a sacred volume, a chapter to a Bible, a Bible to a literature We may be insects, but like the coral insect we build islands which become continents, like the bee we store sustenance for future communities The individual perishes; but the race is immortal The acorn of today is the oak of the next millennium I throw my stone on the cairn and die, but later comers add another stone and yet another, and lo! a mountain I—

zoo [interrupts him by laughing heartily at him]!!!!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [with offended dignity] May I ask what I have said that calls for this merriment?

zoo. Oh, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, you are a funny little man, with your torches, and your flames, and your bricks and edifices and pages and volumes and chapters and coral insects and bees and acorns and stones and mountains

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Metaphors, madam Metaphors merely

zoo Images, images, images I was talking about men, not about images

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. I was illustrating—not, I hope, quite infelicitously—the great march of Progress I was shewing you how, shortlived as we orientals are, mankind gains in stature from generation to generation, from epoch to epoch, from barbarism to civilization, from civilization to perfection

zoo I see The father grows to be six feet high, and hands on his six feet to his son, who adds another six feet and becomes twelve feet high, and hands his twelve feet on to his son, who is full-grown at eighteen feet, and so on. In a thousand years you would all be three or four miles high At that rate your ancestors Bilge and Bluebeard, whom you call giants, must have been about quarter of an inch high

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I am not here to bandy quibbles and paradoxes with a girl who blunders over the greatest names in history I am in earnest I am treating a solemn theme seriously I never said that the son of a man six feet high would be twelve feet high.

zoo You didnt mean that?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Most certainly not

zoo. Then you didnt mean anything Now listen to me, you little ephemeral thing I knew quite well what you meant by your torch handed on from generation to generation But every time that torch is handed on, it dies down to the tiniest spark; and the man who gets it can rekindle it only by his own light You are no taller than Bilge or Bluebeard; and you are no wiser Their wisdom, such as it was, perished with them: so did their strength, if their strength ever existed outside your imagination. I do not know how old you are. you look about five hundred—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Five hundred! Really, madam—

zoo [continuing]; but I know, of course, that you are an ordinary shortliver. Well, your wisdom is only such wisdom as a man can have before he has had experience enough to distinguish his wisdom from his folly, his destiny from his delusions, his—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. In short, such wisdom as your own

zoo No, no, no, no. How often must I tell you that we are made wise not by the recollections of our past, but by the responsibilities of our future I shall be more reckless when I am a tertiary than I am today. If you cannot understand that, at least you must admit that I have learnt from tertiaries I have seen their work and lived under their institutions Like all young things I rebelled against them; and in their hunger for new lights and new ideas they listened to me and encouraged me to rebel But my ways did not work, and theirs did; and they were able to tell me why They have no power over me except that power they refuse all other power, and the consequence is that there are no limits to their power except the limits they set themselves You are a child governed by children, who make so many mistakes and are so naughty that you are in continual rebellion against them; and as they can never convince you that they are right: they can govern you only by beating you, imprisoning you, torturing you, killing you if you disobey them without being strong enough to kill or torture them.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN That may be an unfortunate fact. I condemn it and deplore it But our minds are greater than the facts.

We know better The greatest ancient teachers, followed by the galaxy of Christs who arose in the twentieth century, not to mention such comparatively modern spiritual leaders as Blitherinjam, Tosh, and Spiffkins, all taught that punishment and revenge, coercion and militarism, are mistakes, and that the golden rule—

zoo [*interrupting*] Yes, yes, yes, Daddy we longlived people know that quite well But did any of their disciples ever succeed in governing you for a single day on their Christlike principles? It is not enough to know what is good you must be able to do it They couldnt do it because they did not live long enough to find out how to do it, or to outlive the childish passions that prevented them from really wanting to do it You know very well that they could only keep order—such as it was—by the very coercion and militarism they were denouncing and deploring They had actually to kill one another for preaching their own gospel, or be killed themselves

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN The blood of the martyrs, madam, is the seed of the Church

zoo More images, Daddy! The blood of the shortlived falls on stony ground.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*rising, very testy*] You are simply mad on the subject of longevity I wish you would change it It is rather personal and in bad taste Human nature is human nature, longlived or shortlived, and always will be

zoo Then you give up the idea of progress? You cry off the torch, and the brick, and the acorn, and all the rest of it?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I do nothing of the sort I stand for progress and for freedom broadening down from precedent to precedent

zoo You are certainly a true Briton.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I am proud of it But in your mouth I feel that the compliment hides some insult, so I do not thank you for it

zoo All I meant was that though Britons sometimes say quite clever things and deep things as well as silly and shallow things, they always forget them ten minutes after they have uttered them

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Leave it at that, madam leave it at that [*He sits down again*] Even a Pope is not expected to be continually pontificating Our flashes of inspiration

shew that our hearts are in the right place
zoo Of course You cannot keep your heart in any place but the right place

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Tcha!

zoo But you can keep your hands in the wrong place In your neighbors' pockets, for example So, you see, it is your hands that really matter

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*exhausted*] Well, a woman must have the last word I will not dispute it with you

zoo Good Now let us go back to the really interesting subject of our discussion You remember? The slavery of the shortlived to images and metaphors

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*aghast*] Do you mean to say, madam, that after having talked my head off, and reduced me to despair and silence by your intolerable loquacity, you actually propose to begin all over again? I shall leave you at once

zoo You must not I am your nurse, and you must stay with me

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I absolutely decline to do anything of the sort [*he rises and walks away with marked dignity*]

zoo [*using her tuning-fork*] Zoo on Burrin Pier to Oracle Police at Ennistymon have you got me? What? I am picking you up now but you are flat to my pitch . Just a shade sharper Thats better still a little more. . Got you right Isolate Burrin Pier quick

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*is heard to yell*] Oh!

zoo [*still intoning*] Thanks . Oh nothing serious I am nursing a shortliver and the silly creature has run away he has discouraged himself very badly by gadding about and talking to secondaries and I must keep him strictly to heel.

The Elderly Gentleman returns, indignant

zoo Here he is you can release the Pier thanks Goodbye [*She puts up her tuning-fork*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN This is outrageous When I tried to step off the pier on to the road, I received a shock, followed by an attack of pins and needles which ceased only when I stepped back on to the stones

zoo Yes there is an electric hedge there It is a very old and very crude method of keeping animals from straying

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN We are perfectly familiar with it in Baghdad, madam, but I

little thought I should live to have it ignominiously applied to myself You have actually Kiplingized me

zoo Kiplingized! What is that?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. About a thousand years ago there were two authors named Kipling One was an eastern and a writer of merit: the other, being a western, was of course only an amusing barbarian He is said to have invented the electric hedge I consider that in using it on me you have taken a very great liberty

zoo What is a liberty?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*exasperated*] I shall not explain, madam I believe you know as well as I do [*He sits down on the bollard in dudgeon*]

zoo. No: even you can tell me things I do not know. Havnt you noticed that all the time you have been here we have been asking you questions?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Noticed it! It has almost driven me mad Do you see my white hair? It was hardly grey when I landed. there were patches of its original auburn still distinctly discernible.

zoo That is one of the symptoms of discouragement But have you noticed something much more important to yourself. that is, that you have never asked us any questions, although we know so much more than you do?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I am not a child, madam I believe I have had occasion to say that before And I am an experienced traveller I know that what the traveller observes must really exist, or he could not observe it But what the natives tell him is invariably pure fiction

zoo. Not here, Daddy With us life is too long for telling lies. They all get found out. You'd better ask me questions while you have the chance

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN If I have occasion to consult the oracle I shall address myself to a proper one to a tertiary not to a primary flapper playing at being an oracle If you are a nurserymaid, attend to your duties, and do not presume to ape your elders

zoo [*rising ominously and reddening*] You silly—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*thundering*] Silence! Do you hear! Hold your tongue

zoo Something very disagreeable is happening to me. I feel hot all over. I have a

horrible impulse to injure you What have you done to me?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*triumphant*] Aha! I have made you blush Now you know what blushing means Blushing with shame!

zoo. Whatever you are doing, it is something so utterly evil that if you do not stop I will kill you

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*apprehending his danger*] Doubtless you think it safe to threaten an old man—

zoo [*fiercely*] Old! You are a child: an evil child We kill evil children here We do it even against our own wills, by instinct Take care.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*rising with crest-fallen courtesy*] I did not mean to hurt your feelings I—[*swallowing the apology with an effort*] I beg your pardon [*He takes off his hat, and bows*]

zoo What does that mean?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I withdraw what I said.

zoo How can you withdraw what you said?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I can say no more than that I am sorry.

zoo You have reason to be That hideous sensation you gave me is subsiding, but you have had a very narrow escape Do not attempt to kill me again, for at the first sign in your voice or face I shall strike you dead

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I attempt to kill you! What a monstrous accusation!

zoo [*frowns*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*prudently correcting himself*] I mean misunderstanding I never dreamt of such a thing Surely you cannot believe that I am a murderer

zoo I know you are a murderer It is not merely that you threw words at me as if they were stones, meaning to hurt me. It was the instinct to kill that you roused in me. I did not know it was in my nature: never before has it awakened and sprung out at me warning me to kill or be killed I must now reconsider my whole political position I am no longer a Conservative

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*dropping his hat*] Gracious Heavens! you have lost your senses. I am at the mercy of a madwoman: I might have known it from the beginning I can bear no more of this [*Offering his chest for the sacrifice*] Kill me at once, and much good may my death do you!

zoo It would be useless unless all the other shortlivers were killed at the same time Besides, it is a measure which should be taken politically and constitutionally, not privately However, I am prepared to discuss it with you

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. No, no, no I had much rather discuss your intention of withdrawing from the Conservative party How the Conservatives have tolerated your opinions so far is more than I can imagine I can only conjecture that you have contributed very liberally to the party funds [*He picks up his hat, and sits down again*]

zoo Do not babble so senselessly our chief political controversy is the most momentous in the world for you and your like

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*interested*] Indeed? Pray, may I ask what it is? I am a keen politician, and may perhaps be of some use [*He puts on his hat, cocking it slightly*]

zoo We have two great parties the Conservative party and the Colonization party The Colonizers are of opinion that we should increase our numbers and colonize The Conservatives hold that we should stay as we are, confined to these islands, a race apart, wrapped up in the majesty of our wisdom on a soil held as holy ground for us by an adoring world, with our sacred frontier traced beyond dispute by the sea They contend that it is our destiny to rule the world, and that even when we were shortlived we did so They say that our power and our peace depend on our remoteness, our exclusiveness, our separation, and the restriction of our numbers Five minutes ago that was my political faith Now I do not think there should be any shortlived people at all. [*She throws herself again carelessly on the sacks*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Am I to infer that you deny my right to live because I allowed myself—perhaps injudiciously—to give you a slight scolding?

zoo Is it worth living for so short a time? Are you any good to yourself?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*stupent*] Well, upon my soul!

zoo It is such a very little soul You only encourage the sin of pride in us, and keep us looking down at you instead of up to something higher than ourselves

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Is not that a selfish view, madam? Think of the good you do us by your oracular counsels!

zoo. What good have our counsels ever done you? You come to us for advice when you know you are in difficulties But you never know you are in difficulties until twenty years after you have made the mistakes that led to them, and then it is too late You cannot understand our advice you often do more mischief by trying to act on it than if you had been left to your own childish devices If you were not childish you would not come to us at all you would learn from experience that your consultations of the oracle are never of any real help to you You draw wonderful imaginary pictures of us, and write fictitious tales and poems about our beneficent operations in the past, our wisdom, our justice, our mercy stories in which we often appear as sentimental dupes of your prayers and sacrifices, but you do it only to conceal from yourselves the truth that you are incapable of being helped by us Your Prime Minister pretends that he has come to be guided by the oracle, but we are not deceived we know quite well that he has come here so that when he goes back he may have the authority and dignity of one who has visited the holy islands and spoken face to face with the ineffable ones He will pretend that all the measures he wishes to take for his own purposes have been enjoined on him by the oracle

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN But you forget that the answers of the oracle cannot be kept secret or misrepresented They are written and promulgated The Leader of the Opposition can obtain copies All the nations know them Secret diplomacy has been totally abolished

zoo Yes you publish documents; but they are garbled or forged And even if you published our real answers it would make no difference, because the shortlived cannot interpret the plainest writings Your scriptures command you in the plainest terms to do exactly the contrary of everything your own laws and chosen rulers command and execute You cannot defy Nature It is a law of Nature that there is a fixed relation between conduct and length of life

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I have never heard of any such law, madam

zoo Well, you are hearing of it now

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Let me tell you that we shortlivers, as you call us, have lengthened our lives very considerably

zoo How?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN By saving time. By enabling men to cross the ocean in an afternoon, and to see and speak to one another when they are thousands of miles apart We hope shortly to organize their labor, and press natural forces into their service, so scientifically that the burden of labor will cease to be perceptible, leaving common men more leisure than they will know what to do with

zoo. Daddy the man whose life is lengthened in this way may be busier than a savage; but the difference between such men living seventy years and those living three hundred would be all the greater, for to a shortliver increase of years is only increase of sorrow; but to a longliver every extra year is a prospect which forces him to stretch his faculties to the utmost to face it Therefore I say that we who live three hundred years can be of no use to you who live less than a hundred, and that our true destiny is not to advise and govern you, but to supplant and supersede you In that faith I now declare myself a Colonizer and an Exterminator.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Oh, steady! steady! Pray! pray! Reflect, I implore you It is possible to colonize without exterminating the natives Would you treat us less mercifully than our barbarous forefathers treated the Redskin and the Negro? Are we not, as Britons, entitled at least to some reservations?

zoo What is the use of prolonging the agony? You would perish slowly in our presence, no matter what we did to preserve you You were almost dead when I took charge of you today, merely because you had talked for a few minutes to a secondary Besides, we have our own experience to go upon Have you never heard that our children occasionally revert to the ancestral type, and are born shortlived?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*eagerly*] Never. I hope you will not be offended if I say that it would be a great comfort to me if I could be placed in charge of one of those normal individuals

zoo Abnormal, you mean What you ask is impossible. we weed them all out

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. When you say that you weed them out, you send a cold shiver down my spine I hope you don't mean that you—that you—that you assist Nature

in any way?

zoo Why not? Have you not heard the saying of the Chinese sage Dee Ning, that a good garden needs weeding? But it is not necessary for us to interfere We are naturally rather particular as to the conditions on which we consent to live One does not mind the accidental loss of an arm or a leg or an eye after all, no one with two legs is unhappy because he has not three; so why should a man with one be unhappy because he has not two? But infirmities of mind and temper are quite another matter. If one of us has no self-control, or is too weak to bear the strain of our truthful life without wincing, or is tormented by depraved appetites and superstitions, or is unable to keep free from pain and depression, he naturally becomes discouraged, and refuses to live

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Good Lord! Cuts his throat, do you mean?

zoo No. why should he cut his throat? He simply dies He wants to. He is out of countenance, as we call it

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Well!!! But suppose he is depraved enough not to want to die, and to settle the difficulty by killing all the rest of you?

zoo Oh, he is one of the thoroughly degenerate shortlivers whom we occasionally produce He emigrates

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. And what becomes of him then?

zoo. You shortlived people always think very highly of him. You accept him as what you call a great man

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN You astonish me; and yet I must admit that what you tell me accounts for a great deal of the little I know of the private life of our great men We must be very convenient to you as a dumping place for your failures

zoo I admit that

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Good Then if you carry out your plan of colonization, and leave no shortlived countries in the world, what will you do with your undesirables?

zoo Kill them. Our tertiaries are not at all squeamish about killing

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Gracious Powers!

zoo [*glancing up at the sun*] Come It is just sixteen o'clock; and you have to join your party at half-past in the temple in Galway

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*rising*] Galway! Shall I at last be able to boast of having seen

that magnificent city?

zoo You will be disappointed we have no cities There is a temple of the oracle that is all

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Alas! and I came here to fulfil two long-cherished dreams One was to see Galway It has been said, "See Galway and die" The other was to contemplate the ruins of London

zoo Ruins! We do not tolerate ruins Was London a place of any importance?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [amazed] What! London! It was the mightiest city of antiquity [Rhetorically] Situate just where the Dover Road crosses the Thames, it—

zoo [curtly interrupting] There is nothing there now Why should anybody pitch on such a spot to live? The nearest houses are at a place called Strand-on-the-Green it is very old. Come We shall go across the water [She goes down the steps]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Sic transit gloria mundi!

zoo [from below] What did you say?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [despairingly] Nothing You would not understand [He goes down the steps]

ACT II

A courtyard before the columned portico of a temple The temple door is in the middle of the portico A veiled and robed woman of majestic carriage passes along behind the columns towards the entrance From the opposite direction a man of compact figure, clean-shaven, saturnine, and self-centred in short, very like Napoleon I, and wearing a military uniform of Napoleonic cut, marches with measured steps, places his hand in his lapel in the traditional manner, and fixes the woman with his eye She stops, her attitude expressing haughtily amazement at his audacity He is on her right she on his left

NAPOLEON [impressively] I am the Man of Destiny

THE VEILED WOMAN [unimpressed] How did you get in here?

NAPOLEON I walked in. I go on until I am stopped I never am stopped I tell you I am the Man of Destiny

THE VEILED WOMAN You will be a man of very short destiny if you wander about here without one of our children to guide you I suppose you belong to the Baghdad envoy

NAPOLEON I came with him, but I do not belong to him I belong to myself Direct me to the oracle if you can If not, do not waste my time

THE VEILED WOMAN Your time, poor creature, is short. I will not waste it. Your envoy and his party will be here presently The consultation of the oracle is arranged for them, and will take place according to the prescribed ritual You can wait here until they come [she turns to go into the temple]

NAPOLEON I never wait [She stops] The prescribed ritual is, I believe, the classical one of the pythoness on her tripod, the intoxicating fumes arising from the abyss, the convulsions of the priestess as she delivers the message of the God, and so on That sort of thing does not impose on me I use it myself to impose on simpletons I believe that what is, is I know that what is not, is not The antics of a woman sitting on a tripod and pretending to be drunk do not interest me. Her words are put into her mouth, not by a god, but by a man three hundred years old, who has had the capacity to profit by his experience I wish to speak to that man face to face, without mummery or imposture

THE VEILED WOMAN You seem to be an unusually sensible person. But there is no old man I am the oracle on duty today I am on my way now to take my place on the tripod, and go through the usual mummery, as you rightly call it, to impress your friend the envoy As you are superior to that kind of thing, you may consult me now [She leads the way into the middle of the courtyard] What do you want to know?

NAPOLEON [following her] Madam I have not come all this way to discuss matters of State with a woman. I must ask you to direct me to one of your oldest and ablest men

THE ORACLE None of our oldest and ablest men or women would dream of wasting their time on you You would die of discouragement in their presence in less than three hours

NAPOLEON You can keep this idle fable of discouragement for people credulous enough to be intimidated by it, madam I do not believe in metaphysical forces

THE ORACLE No one asks you to A field is something physical, is it not Well, I have a field.

NAPOLEON I have several million fields I

am Emperor of Turania

THE ORACLE You do not understand I am not speaking of an agricultural field Do you not know that every mass of matter in motion carries with it an invisible gravitational field, every magnet an invisible magnetic field, and every living organism a mesmeric field? Even you have a perceptible mesmeric field Feeble as it is, it is the strongest I have yet observed in a shortliver.

NAPOLEON. By no means feeble, madam I understand you now; and I may tell you that the strongest characters blench in my presence, and submit to my domination. But I do not call that a physical force

THE ORACLE What else do you call it, pray? Our physicists deal with it Our mathematicians express its measurements in algebraic equations

NAPOLEON Do you mean that they could measure mine?

THE ORACLE Yes by a figure infinitely near to zero Even in us the force is negligible during our first century of life In our second century it develops quickly, and becomes dangerous to shortlivers who venture into its field If I were not veiled and robed in insulating material you could not endure my presence; and I am still a young woman one hundred and seventy if you wish to know exactly

NAPOLEON [*folding his arms*] I am not intimidated no woman alive, old or young, can put me out of countenance Unveil, madam Disrobe You will move this temple as easily as shake me

THE ORACLE Very well [*she throws back her veil*]

NAPOLEON [*shrieking, staggering, and covering his eyes*] No. Stop Hide your face again [*Shutting his eyes and distractedly clutching at his throat and heart*] Let me go Help! I am dying

THE ORACLE Do you still wish to consult an older person?

NAPOLEON. No, no. The veil, the veil, I beg you.

THE ORACLE [*replacing the veil*] So

NAPOLEON Ouf! One cannot always be at one's best Twice before in my life I have lost my nerve and behaved like a poltroon But I warn you not to judge my quality by these involuntary moments

THE ORACLE I have no occasion to judge of your quality You want my advice Speak

quickly; or I shall go about my business

NAPOLEON [*After a moment's hesitation, sinks respectfully on one knee*] I—

THE ORACLE Oh, rise, rise Are you so foolish as to offer me this mummery which even you despise?

NAPOLEON [*rising*] I knelt in spite of myself. I compliment you on your impressiveness, madam

THE ORACLE [*impatiently*] Time! time! time! time!

NAPOLEON You will not grudge me the necessary time, madam, when you know my case I am a man gifted with a certain specific talent in a degree altogether extraordinary I am not otherwise a very extraordinary person my family is not influential, and without this talent I should cut no particular figure in the world

THE ORACLE Why cut a figure in the world?

NAPOLEON Superiority will make itself felt, madam But when I say I possess this talent I do not express myself accurately. The truth is that my talent possesses me It is genius It drives me to exercise it I must exercise it I am great when I exercise it. At other moments I am nobody

THE ORACLE Well, exercise it. Do you need an oracle to tell you that?

NAPOLEON. Wait This talent involves the shedding of human blood

THE ORACLE Are you a surgeon, or a dentist?

NAPOLEON Psha! You do not appreciate me, madam I mean the shedding of oceans of blood, the death of millions of men

THE ORACLE They object, I suppose.

NAPOLEON. Not at all They adore me

THE ORACLE Indeed!

NAPOLEON I have never shed blood with my own hand. They kill each other. they die with shouts of triumph on their lips Those who die cursing do not curse me My talent is to organize this slaughter; to give mankind this terrible joy which they call glory; to let loose the devil in them that peace has bound in chains

THE ORACLE And you? Do you share their joy?

NAPOLEON Not at all What satisfaction is it to me to see one fool pierce the entrails of another with a bayonet? I am a man of princely character, but of simple personal tastes and habits I have the virtues of a laborer industry and indifference to personal

comfort But I must rule, because I am so superior to other men that it is intolerable to me to be misruled by them Yet only as a slayer can I become a ruler I cannot be great as a writer I have tried and failed I have no talent as a sculptor or painter, and as lawyer, preacher, doctor, or actor, scores of second-rate men can do as well as I, or better I am not even a diplomatist I can only play my trump card of force What I can do is to organize war Look at me! I seem a man like other men, because nine-tenths of me is common humanity But the other tenth is a faculty for seeing things as they are that no other man possesses

THE ORACLE You mean that you have no imagination?

NAPOLEON [*forcibly*] I mean that I have the only imagination worth having the power of imagining things as they are, even when I cannot see them You feel yourself my superior, I know nay, you are my superior have I not bowed my knee to you by instinct? Yet I challenge you to a test of our respective powers Can you calculate what the mathematicians call vectors, without putting a single algebraic symbol on paper? Can you launch ten thousand men across a frontier and a chain of mountains and know to a mile exactly where they will be at the end of seven weeks? The rest is nothing I got it all from the books at my military school Now this great game of war, this playing with armies as other men play with bowls and skittles, is one which I must go on playing, partly because a man must do what he can and not what he would like to do, and partly because, if I stop, I immediately lose my power and become a beggar in the land where I now make men drunk with glory

THE ORACLE No doubt then you wish to know how to extricate yourself from this unfortunate position?

NAPOLEON It is not generally considered unfortunate, madam Supremely fortunate rather

THE ORACLE If you think so, go on making them drunk with glory Why trouble me with their folly and your vectors?

NAPOLEON Unluckily, madam, men are not only heroes they are also cowards They desire glory, but they dread death

THE ORACLE Why should they? Their lives are too short to be worth living That is why they think your game of war worth playing

NAPOLEON They do not look at it quite in that way The most worthless soldier wants to live for ever To make him risk being killed by the enemy I have to convince him that if he hesitates he will inevitably be shot at dawn by his own comrades for cowardice

THE ORACLE And if his comrades refuse to shoot him?

NAPOLEON They will be shot too, of course.

THE ORACLE By whom?

NAPOLEON By their comrades

THE ORACLE And if they refuse?

NAPOLEON Up to a certain point they do not refuse

THE ORACLE But when that point is reached, you have to do the shooting yourself, eh?

NAPOLEON Unfortunately, madam, when that point is reached, they shoot me

THE ORACLE Mf! It seems to me they might as well shoot you first as last Why don't they?

NAPOLEON Because their love of fighting, their desire for glory, their shame of being branded as dastards, their instinct to test themselves in terrible trials, their fear of being killed or enslaved by the enemy, their belief that they are defending their hearths and homes, overcome their natural cowardice, and make them willing not only to risk their own lives but to kill everyone who refuses to take that risk. But if war continues too long, there comes a time when the soldiers, and also the taxpayers who are supporting and munitioning them, reach a condition which they describe as being fed up The troops have proved their courage, and want to go home and enjoy in peace the glory it has earned them Besides, the risk of death for each soldier becomes a certainty if the fighting goes on for ever he hopes to escape for six months, but knows he cannot escape for six years The risk of bankruptcy for the citizen becomes a certainty in the same way Now what does this mean for me?

THE ORACLE Does that matter in the midst of such calamity?

NAPOLEON Psha! madam it is the only thing that matters the value of human life is the value of the greatest living man Cut off that infinitesimal layer of grey matter which distinguishes my brain from that of the common man, and you cut down the stature of humanity from that of a giant to that of a nobody I matter supremely my soldiers do not matter at all there are plenty more where they came from If you kill me,

or put a stop to my activity (it is the same thing), the nobler part of human life perishes. You must save the world from that catastrophe, madam War has made me popular, powerful, famous, historically immortal. But I foresee that if I go on to the end it will leave me execrated, dethroned, imprisoned, perhaps executed. Yet if I stop fighting I commit suicide as a great man and become a common one. How am I to escape the horns of this tragic dilemma? Victory I can guarantee I am invincible. But the cost of victory is the demoralization, the depopulation, the ruin of the victors no less than of the vanquished. How am I to satisfy my genius by fighting until I die? that is my question to you

THE ORACLE Were you not rash to venture into these sacred islands with such a question on your lips? Warriors are not popular here, my friend

NAPOLEON If a soldier were restrained by such a consideration, madam, he would no longer be a soldier. Besides [he produces a pistol] I have not come unarmed

THE ORACLE What is that thing?

NAPOLEON It is an instrument of my profession, madam. I raise this hammer, I point the barrel at you, I pull this trigger that is against my forefinger, and you fall dead

THE ORACLE Shew it to me [She puts out her hand to take it from him]

NAPOLEON [retreating a step] Pardon me, madam. I never trust my life in the hands of a person over whom I have no control

THE ORACLE [sternly] Give it to me [She raises her hand to her veil]

NAPOLEON [dropping the pistol and covering his eyes] Quarter! Kamerad! Take it, madam [he kicks it towards her] I surrender.

THE ORACLE Give me that thing. Do you expect me to stoop for it?

NAPOLEON [taking his hands from his eyes with an effort] A poor victory, madam [he picks up the pistol and hands it to her] there was no vector strategy needed to win it [Making a pose of his humiliation] But enjoy your triumph: you have made me—ME! Cain Adamson Charles Napoleon! Emperor of Turania! cry for quarter

THE ORACLE The way out of your difficulty, Cain Adamson, is very simple

NAPOLEON [eagerly] Good. What is it?

THE ORACLE To die before the tide of glory turns. Allow me. [She shoots him]

He falls with a shriek. She throws the pistol away and goes haughtily into the temple

NAPOLEON [scrambling to his feet] Murderess! Monster! She-devil, Unnatural, inhuman wretch! You deserve to be hanged, guillotined, broken on the wheel, burnt alive. No sense of the sacredness of human life! No thought for my wife and children! Bitch! Sow! Wanton! [He picks up the pistol] And missed me at five yards! That's a woman all over

He is going away whence he came when Zoo arrives and confronts him at the head of a party consisting of the British Envoy, the Elderly Gentleman, the Envoy's wife, and her daughter, aged about eighteen. The Envoy, a typical politician, looks like an imperfectly reformed criminal disguised by a good tailor. The dress of the ladies is coeval with that of the Elderly Gentleman, and suitable for public official ceremonies in western capitals at the XVIII-XIX fin de siècle

They file in under the portico. Zoo immediately comes out imperiously to Napoleon's right, whilst the Envoy's wife hurries effusively to his left. The Envoy meanwhile passes along behind the columns to the door, followed by his daughter. The Elderly Gentleman stops just where he entered, to see why Zoo has swooped so abruptly on the Emperor of Turania

zoo [to Napoleon, severely] What are you doing here by yourself? You have no business to go about here alone. What was that noise just now? What is that in your hand?

Napoleon glares at her in speechless fury; pockets the pistol, and produces a whistle

THE ENVOY'S WIFE Arnt you coming with us to the oracle, sire?

NAPOLEON To hell with the oracle, and with you too [he turns to go]!

THE ENVOY'S WIFE } [together] { Oh, sire!
zoo } { Where are
you going?

NAPOLEON To fetch the police [He goes out past Zoo, almost jostling her, and blowing piercing blasts on his whistle]

zoo [whipping out her tuning-fork and intoning] Hallo Galway Central [The whistling continues] Stand by to isolate [To the Elderly Gentleman, who is staring after the whistling Emperor] How far has he gone?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. To that curious statue of a fat old man.

zoo [quickly, intoning] Isolate the Falstaff monument, isolate hard. Paralyze— [The whistling stops] Thank you [She puts up her tuning-fork] He shall not move a muscle

until I come to fetch him

THE ENVOY'S WIFE Oh! he will be frightfully angry! Did you hear what he said to me?
zoo Much we care for his anger!

THE DAUGHTER [*coming forward between her mother and Zoo*] Please, madam, whose statue is it? and where can I buy a picture postcard of it? It is so funny I will take a snapshot when we are coming back, but they come out so badly sometimes.

zoo They will give you pictures and toys in the temple to take away with you The story of the statue is too long. It would bore you [*She goes past them across the courtyard to get rid of them*]

THE WIFE [*gushing*] Oh no, I assure you

THE DAUGHTER [*copying her mother*] We should be so interested.

zoo Nonsense! All I can tell you about it is that a thousand years ago, when the whole world was given over to you shorthved people, there was a war called the War to end War In the war which followed it about ten years later, hardly any soldiers were killed, but seven of the capital cities of Europe were wiped out of existence It seems to have been a great joke, for the statesmen who thought they had sent ten million common men to their deaths were themselves blown into fragments with their houses and families, while the ten million men lay snugly in the caves they had dug for themselves Later on even the houses escaped, but their inhabitants were poisoned by gas that spared no living soul Of course the soldiers starved and ran wild, and that was the end of pseudo-Christian civilization. The last civilized thing that happened was that the statesmen discovered that cowardice was a great patriotic virtue, and a public monument was erected to its first preacher, an ancient and very fat sage called Sir John Falstaff Well [*pointing*], thats Falstaff

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*coming from the portico to his granddaughter's right*] Great Heavens! And at the base of this monstrous poltroon's statue the War God of Turania is now gibbering impotently

zoo. Serve him right! War God indeed!

THE ENVOY [*coming between his wife and Zoo*] I don't know any history a modern Prime Minister has something better to do than sit reading books, but—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*interrupting him encouragingly*] You make history, Ambrose

THE ENVOY Well, perhaps I do, and perhaps history makes me. I hardly recognize myself in the newspapers sometimes, though I suppose leading articles are the materials of history, as you might say But what I want to know is, how did war come back again? and how did they make those poisonous gases you speak of? We should be glad to know, for they might come in very handy if we have to fight Turania. Of course I am all for peace, and don't hold with the race of armaments in principle, still, we must keep ahead or be wiped out

zoo You can make the gases for yourselves when your chemists find out how Then you will do as you did before poison each other until there are no chemists left, and no civilization. You will then begin all over again as half-starved ignorant savages, and fight with boomerangs and poisoned arrows until you work up to the poison gases and high explosives once more, with the same result That is, unless we have sense enough to make an end of this ridiculous game by destroying you

THE ENVOY [*aghast*] Destroying us!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I told you, Ambrose I warned you

THE ENVOY But—

zoo [*impatiently*] I wonder what Zozim is doing He ought to be here to receive you.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Do you mean that rather insufferable young man whom you found boring me on the pier?

zoo Yes He has to dress-up in a Druids' robe, and put on a wig and a long false beard, to impress you silly people I have to put on a purple mantle I have no patience with such mummery, but you expect it from us, so I suppose it must be kept up Will you wait here until Zozim comes, please [*She turns to enter the temple*]

THE ENVOY My good lady, is it worth while dressing-up and putting on false beards for us if you tell us beforehand that it is all humbug?

zoo One would not think so, but if you won't believe in anyone who is not dressed-up, why, we must dress-up for you It was you who invented all this nonsense, not we

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN But do you expect us to be impressed, after this?

zoo I don't expect anything I know, as a matter of experience, that you will be impressed. The oracle will frighten you out of

your wits. [*She goes into the temple*]

THE WIFE. These people treat us as if we were dirt beneath their feet I wonder at you putting up with it, Amby It would serve them right if we went home at once wouldnt it, Eth?

THE DAUGHTER Yes, mamma But perhaps they wouldnt mind

THE ENVOY No use talking like that, Molly. Ive got to see this oracle. The folks at home wont know how we have been treated all theyll know is that Ive stood face to face with the oracle and had the straight tip from her I hope this Zozim chap is not going to keep us waiting much longer, for I feel far from comfortable about the approaching interview; and thats the honest truth.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. I never thought I should want to see that man again; but now I wish he would take charge of us instead of Zoo. She was charming at first: quite charming, but she turned into a fiend because I had a few words with her You would not believe. she very nearly killed me You heard what she said just now. She belongs to a party here which wants to have us all killed.

THE WIFE [*terrified*] Us! But we have done nothing we have been as nice to them as nice could be Oh, Amby, come away, come away there is something dreadful about this place and these people.

THE ENVOY. There is, and no mistake But youre safe with me you ought to have sense enough to know that

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. I am sorry to say, Molly, that it is not merely us four poor weak creatures they want to kill, but the entire race of Man, except themselves.

THE ENVOY. Not so poor neither, Poppa. Nor so weak, if you are going to take in all the Powers If it comes to killing, two can play at that game, longlived or shortlived.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. No, Ambrose we should have no chance We are worms beside these fearful people. mere worms

Zozim comes from the temple, robed majestically, and wearing a wreath of mistletoe in his flowing white wig His false beard reaches almost to his waist He carries a staff with a curiously carved top

ZOZIM [*in the doorway, impressively*] Hail, strangers!

ALL [*reverently*] Hail!

ZOZIM. Are ye prepared?

THE ENVOY. We are

zozim [*unexpectedly becoming conversational, and strolling down carelessly to the middle of the group between the two ladies*] Well, I'm sorry to say the oracle is not She was delayed by some member of your party who got loose; and as the show takes a bit of arranging, you will have to wait a few minutes. The ladies can go inside and look round the entrance hall and get pictures and things if they want them.

THE WIFE	} [<i>together</i>]	{	Thank you.	} [<i>They go into the temple</i>].
THE DAUGHTER			I should like to, very much	

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*in dignified rebuke of Zozim's levity*] Taken in this spirit, sir, the show, as you call it, becomes almost an insult to our common sense.

ZOZIM Quite, I should say You need not keep it up with me.

THE ENVOY [*suddenly making himself very agreeable*] Just so. just so We can wait as long as you please And now, if I may be allowed to seize the opportunity of a few minutes' friendly chat—?

ZOZIM. By all means, if only you will talk about things I can understand.

THE ENVOY. Well, about this colonizing plan of yours. My father-in-law here has been telling me something about it; and he has just now let out that you want not only to colonize us, but to—to—to—well, shall we say to supersede us? Now why supersede us? Why not live and let live? Theres not a scrap of ill-feeling on our side. We should welcome a colony of immortals—we may almost call you that—in the British Middle East No doubt the Turanian Empire, with its Mahometan traditions, overshadows us now. We have had to bring the Emperor with us on this expedition, though of course you know as well as I do that he has imposed himself on my party just to spy on me I dont deny that he has the whip hand of us to some extent, because if it came to a war none of our generals could stand up against him. I give him best at that game he is the finest soldier in the world. Besides, he is an emperor and an autocrat; and I am only an elected representative of the British democracy. Not that our British democrats wont fight they will fight the heads off all the Turanians that ever walked; but then it takes so long to work them up to it, while he has only to say the word and march. But you people would

never get on with him Believe me, you would not be as comfortable in Turania as you would be with us We understand you We like you We are easy-going people, and we are rich people That will appeal to you Turania is a poor place when all is said Five-eighths of it is desert They dont irrigate as we do Besides—now I am sure this will appeal to you and to all right-minded men—we are Christians

zozim The old uns prefer Mahometans

THE ENVOY [*shocked*] What!

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THE ENVOY Well, of all the disgraceful—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*diplomatically interrupting his scandalized son-in-law*] There can be no doubt, I am afraid, that by clinging too long to the obsolete features of the old pseudo-Christian Churches we allowed the Mahometans to get ahead of us at a very critical period of the development of the Eastern world When the Mahometan Reformation took place, it left its followers with the enormous advantage of having the only established religion in the world in whose articles of faith any intelligent and educated person could believe

THE ENVOY But what about our Reformation? Dont give the show away, Poppa. We followed suit, didnt we?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Unfortunately, Ambrose, we could not follow suit very rapidly We had not only a religion to deal with, but a Church

zozim What is a Church?

THE ENVOY Not know what a Church is! Well!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN You must excuse me, but if I attempted to explain you would only ask me what a bishop is, and that is a question that no mortal man can answer All I can tell you is that Mahomet was a truly wise man, for he founded a religion without a Church, consequently when the time came for a Reformation of the mosques there were no bishops and priests to obstruct it. Our bishops and priests prevented us for two hundred years from following suit, and we have never recovered the start we lost then I can only plead that we did reform our Church at last No doubt we had to make a few compromises as a matter of good taste, but there is now very little in our Articles of Religion that is not accepted as at least alle-

gorically true by our Higher Criticism.

THE ENVOY [*encouragingly*] Besides, does it matter? Why, I have never read the Articles in my life, and I am Prime Minister! Come! if my services in arranging for the reception of a colonizing party would be acceptable, they are at your disposal And when I say a reception I mean a reception Royal honors, mind you! A salute of a hundred and one guns! The streets lined with troops! The Guards turned out at the Palace! Dinner at the Guildhall!

zozim Discourage me if I know what youre talking about! I wish Zoo would come she understands these things All I can tell you is that the general opinion among the Colonizers is in favor of beginning in a country where the people are of a different color from us, so that we can make short work without any risk of mistakes

THE ENVOY. What do you mean by short work? I hope—

zozim [*with obviously feigned geniality*] Oh, nothing, nothing, nothing We are thinking of trying North America thats all. You see, the Red Men of that country used to be white They passed through a period of sallow complexions, followed by a period of no complexions at all, into the red characteristic of their climate Besides, several cases of long life have occurred in North America. They joined us here, and their stock soon reverted to the original white of these islands

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN But have you considered the possibility of your colony turning red?

zozim That wont matter We are not particular about our pigmentation The old books mention red-faced Englishmen they appear to have been common objects at one time

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*very persuasively*] But do you think you would be popular in North America? It seems to me, if I may say so, that on your own shewing you need a country in which society is organized in a series of highly exclusive circles, in which the privacy of private life is very jealously guarded, and in which no one presumes to speak to anyone else without an introduction following a strict examination of social credentials It is only in such a country that persons of special tastes and attainments can form a little world of their own, and protect

themselves absolutely from intrusion by common persons. I think I may claim that our British society has developed this exclusiveness to perfection. If you would pay us a visit and see the working of our caste system, our club system, our guild system, you would admit that nowhere else in the world, least of all perhaps in North America, which has a regrettable tradition of social promiscuity, could you keep yourselves so entirely to yourselves.

zozim [*good-naturedly embarrassed*] Look here There is no good discussing this I had rather not explain, but it wont make any difference to our Colonizers what sort of shortlivers they come across We shall arrange all that. Never mind how. Let us join the ladies

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*throwing off his diplomatic attitude and abandoning himself to despair*] We understand you only too well, sir Well, kill us End the lives you have made miserably unhappy by opening up to us the possibility that any of us may live three hundred years I solemnly curse that possibility To you it may be a blessing, because you do live three hundred years To us, who will live less than a hundred, whose flesh is as grass, it is the most unbearable burden our poor tortured humanity has ever groaned under

THE ENVOY Hullo, Poppa! Steady! How do you make that out?

zozim. What is three hundred years? Short enough, if you ask me. Why, in the old days you people lived on the assumption that you were going to last out for ever and ever and ever Immortal, you thought yourselves Were you any happier then?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. As President of the Baghdad Historical Society I am in a position to inform you that the communities which took this monstrous pretension seriously were the most wretched of which we have any record. My society has printed an editio princeps of the works of the father of history, Thucyderabadus Macollybuckle. Have you read his account of what was blasphemously called the Perfect City of God, and the attempt made to reproduce it in the northern part of these islands by Jonhobsnoxius, called the Leviathan? Those misguided people sacrificed the fragment of life that was granted to them to an imaginary immortality. They crucified the prophet who

told them to take no thought for the morrow, and that here and now was their Australia. Australia being a term signifying paradise, or an eternity of bliss They tried to produce a condition of death in life to mortify the flesh, as they called it.

zozim Well, you are not suffering from that, are you? You have not a mortified air

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Naturally we are not absolutely insane and suicidal Nevertheless we impose on ourselves abstinences and disciplines and studies that are meant to prepare us for living three centuries And we seldom live one My childhood was made unnecessarily painful, my boyhood unnecessarily laborious, by ridiculous preparations for a length of days which the chances were fifty thousand to one against my ever attaining I have been cheated out of the natural joys and freedoms of my life by this dream to which the existence of these islands and their oracles gives a delusive possibility of realization I curse the day when long life was invented, just as the victims of Jonhobsnoxius cursed the day when eternal life was invented

zozim Pooh! You could live three centuries if you chose

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. That is what the fortunate always say to the unfortunate Well, I do not choose I accept my three score and ten years. If they are filled with usefulness, with justice, with mercy, with good-will. if they are the lifetime of a soul that never loses its honor and a brain that never loses its eagerness, they are enough for me, because these things are infinite and eternal, and can make ten of my years as long as thirty of yours I shall not conclude by saying live as long as you like and be damned to you, because I have risen for the moment far above any ill-will to you or to any fellow-creature, but I am your equal before that eternity in which the difference between your lifetime and mine is as the difference between one drop of water and three in the eyes of the Almighty Power from which we have both proceeded

zozim [*impressed*] You spoke that piece very well, Daddy. I couldnt talk like that if I tried It sounded fine Ah! here come the ladies

To his relief, they have just appeared on the threshold of the temple

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now draped and hooded in voluminous folds of a single piece of grey-white stuff. Something supernatural about her terrifies the beholders, who throw themselves on their faces. Her outline flows and waves. she is almost distinct at moments, and again vague and shadowy. above all, she is larger than life-size, not enough to be measured by the flustered congregation, but enough to affect them with a dreadful sense of her supernaturalness,

zoo. Get up, get up. Do pull yourselves together, you people

The Envoy and his family, by shuddering negatively, intimate that it is impossible. The Elderly Gentleman manages to get on his hands and knees.

zoo. Come on, Daddy. you are not afraid. Speak to her. She wont wait here all day for you, you know

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*rising very deferentially to his feet*] Madam: you will excuse my very natural nervousness in addressing, for the first time in my life, a—a—a—a goddess. My friend and relative the Envoy is unhinged. I throw myself upon your indulgence—

zoo [*interrupting him intolerantly*] Dont throw yourself on anything belonging to her or you will go right through her and break your neck. She isnt solid, like you.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I was speaking figuratively—

zoo. You have been told not to do it. Ask her what you want to know; and be quick about it

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*stooping and taking the prostrate Envoy by the shoulders*] Ambrose you must make an effort. You cannot go back to Baghdad without the answers to your questions.

THE ENVOY [*rising to his knees*] I shall be only too glad to get back alive on any terms. If my legs would support me I'd just do a bunk straight for the ship

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. No, no. Remember. your dignity—

THE ENVOY Dignity be damned! I'm terrified. Take me away, for God's sake

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*producing a brandy flask and taking the cap off*] Try some of this. It is still nearly full, thank goodness!

THE ENVOY [*clutching it and drinking eagerly*] Ah! Thats better. [*He tries to drink again. Finding that he has emptied it, he hands it back to his father-in-law upside down*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*taking it*] Great heavens! He has swallowed half-a-pint of neat brandy. [*Much perturbed, he screws the cap on again, and pockets the flask*]

THE ENVOY [*staggering to his feet, pulling a paper from his pocket, and speaking with boisterous confidence*] Get up, Molly. Up with you, Eth.

The two women rise to their knees

THE ENVOY What I want to ask is this [*He refers to the paper*] Ahem! Civilization has reached a crisis. We are at the parting of the ways. We stand on the brink of the Rubicon. Shall we take the plunge? Already a leaf has been torn out of the book of the Sybil. Shall we wait until the whole volume is consumed? On our right is the crater of the volcano. on our left the precipice. One false step, and we go down to annihilation dragging the whole human race with us [*He pauses for breath*].

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*recovering his spirits under the familiar stimulus of political oratory*] Hear, hear!

zoo. What are you raving about? Ask your question while you have the chance? What is it you want to know?

THE ENVOY [*patronizing her in the manner of a Premier debating with a very young member of the Opposition*] A young woman asks me a question. I am always glad to see the young taking an interest in politics. It is an impatient question, but it is a practical question, an intelligent question. She asks why we seek to lift a corner of the veil that shrouds the future from our feeble vision

zoo I dont. I ask you to tell the oracle what you want, and not keep her sitting there all day

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*warmly*] Order, order!

zoo What does "Order, order!" mean?

THE ENVOY. I ask the august oracle to listen to my voice—

zoo. You people seem never to tire of listening to your voices; but it doesnt amuse us. What do you want?

THE ENVOY. I want, young woman, to be allowed to proceed without unseemly interruptions

A low roll of thunder comes from the abyss.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN There! Even the oracle is indignant. [*To the Envoy*] Do not allow yourself to be put down by this lady's rude clamor. Ambrose. Take no notice. Proceed

exaltation to distress] It means nothing to him in this land of discouragement the sublime has become the ridiculous [Turning on the hopelessly puzzled Zozim] "Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a span long, and mine age is even as nothing in respect of thee "

THE WIFE

THE DAUGHTER

[running to him]

Poppa, Poppa dont look like that.
Oh, granpa, whats the matter?

ZOZIM *[with a shrug]* Discouragement!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN *[throwing off the women with a superb gesture]* Liar! *[Recollecting himself, he adds, with noble courtesy, raising his hat and bowing]* I beg your pardon, sir, but I am NOT discouraged

A burst of orchestral music, through which a powerful gong sounds, is heard from the temple Zoo, in a purple robe, appears in the doorway
zoo Come The oracle is ready

Zozim motions them to the threshold with a wave of his staff The Envoy and the Elderly Gentleman take off their hats and go into the temple on tiptoe, Zoo leading the way The Wife and Daughter, frightened as they are, raise their heads uppishly and follow flatfooted, sustained by a sense of their Sunday clothes and social consequence Zozim remains in the portico, alone

ZOZIM *[taking of his wig, beard, and robe, and bundling them under his arm]* Ouf! *[He goes home]*

ACT III

Inside the temple A gallery overhanging an abyss Dead silence The gallery is brightly lighted, but beyond is a vast gloom, continually changing in intensity A shaft of violet light shoots upward, and a very harmonious and silvery carillon chimes When it ceases the violet ray vanishes

Zoo comes along the gallery, followed by the Envoy's daughter, his wife, the Envoy himself, and the Elderly Gentleman The two men are holding their hats with the brims near their noses, as if prepared to pray into them at a moment's notice Zoo halts they all follow her example They contemplate the void with awe Organ music of the kind called sacred in the nineteenth century begins Their awe deepens The violet ray, now a diffused mist, rises again from the abyss

THE WIFE *[to Zoo, in a reverent whisper]* Shall we kneel?

zoo *[loudly]* Yes, if you want to You can

stand on your head if you like *[She sits down carelessly on the gallery railing, with her back to the abyss]*

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN *[jaded by her callousness]* We desire to behave in a becoming manner

zoo Very well Behave just as you feel It doesnt matter how you behave But keep your wits about you when the pythoiness ascends, or you will forget the questions you have come to ask her

THE ENVOY

THE DAUGHTER

[simultaneously]

[very nervous, takes out a paper to refresh his memory]
Ahem!
[alarmed] The pythoiness? Is she a snake?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Tch-ch! The priestess of the oracle A sybil A prophetess Not a snake

THE WIFE. How awfull

zoo I'm glad you think so

THE WIFE Oh dear! Dont you think so?

zoo No This sort of thing is got up to impress you, not to impress me

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I wish you would let it impress us, then, madam I am deeply impressed, but you are spoiling the effect.

zoo You just wait All this business with coloured lights and chords on that old organ is only tomfoolery Wait til you see the pythoiness

The Envoy's wife falls on her knees, and takes refuge in prayer

THE DAUGHTER *[trembling]* Are we really going to see a woman who has lived three hundred years?

zoo Stuff! Youd drop dead if a tertiary as much as looked at you The oracle is only a hundred and seventy, and youll find it hard enough to stand her

THE DAUGHTER *[piteously]* Oh! *[She falls on her knees]*

THE ENVOY Whew! Stand by me, Poppa This is a little more than I bargained for Are you going to kneel, or how?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Perhaps it would be in better taste

The two men kneel

The vapor of the abyss thickens, and a distant roll of thunder seems to come from its depths The pythoiness, seated on her tripod, rises slowly from it She has discarded the insulating robe and veil in which she conversed with Napoleon, and is

now draped and hooded in voluminous folds of a single piece of grey-white stuff Something supernatural about her terrifies the beholders, who throw themselves on their faces Her outline flows and waves she is almost distinct at moments, and again vague and shadowy. above all, she is larger than life-size, not enough to be measured by the flustered congregation, but enough to affect them with a dreadful sense of her supernaturalness,

zoo Get up, get up Do pull yourselves together, you people

The Envoy and his family, by shuddering negatively, intimate that it is impossible The Elderly Gentleman manages to get on his hands and knees.

zoo. Come on, Daddy you are not afraid Speak to her She wont wait here all day for you, you know.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*rising very deferentially to his feet*] Madam. you will excuse my very natural nervousness in addressing, for the first time in my life, a—a—a—a goddess My friend and relative the Envoy is unhinged I throw myself upon your indulgence—

zoo [*interrupting him intolerantly*] Dont throw yourself on anything belonging to her or you will go right through her and break your neck. She isnt solid, like you.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I was speaking figuratively—

zoo. You have been told not to do it Ask her what you want to know; and be quick about it

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*stooping and taking the prostrate Envoy by the shoulders*] Ambrose. you must make an effort You cannot go back to Baghdad without the answers to your questions

THE ENVOY [*rising to his knees*] I shall be only too glad to get back alive on any terms If my legs would support me I'd just do a bunk straight for the ship

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN No, no Remember your dignity—

THE ENVOY Dignity be damned! I'm terrified Take me away, for God's sake

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*producing a brandy flask and taking the cap off*] Try some of this. It is still nearly full, thank goodness!

THE ENVOY [*clutching it and drinking eagerly*] Ah! Thats better. [*He tries to drink again. Finding that he has emptied it, he hands it back to his father-in-law upside down*]

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*taking it*] Great heavens! He has swallowed half-a-pint of neat brandy [*Much perturbed, he screws the cap on again, and pockets the flask*]

THE ENVOY [*staggering to his feet, pulling a paper from his pocket, and speaking with boisterous confidence*] Get up, Molly Up with you, Eth

The two women rise to their knees.

THE ENVOY What I want to ask is this [*He refers to the paper*] Ahem! Civilization has reached a crisis We are at the parting of the ways We stand on the brink of the Rubicon Shall we take the plunge? Already a leaf has been torn out of the book of the Sybil Shall we wait until the whole volume is consumed? On our right is the crater of the volcano on our left the precipice One false step, and we go down to annihilation dragging the whole human race with us [*He pauses for breath*].

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*recovering his spirits under the familiar stimulus of political oratory*] Hear, hear!

zoo What are you raving about? Ask your question while you have the chance? What is it you want to know?

THE ENVOY [*patronizing her in the manner of a Premier debating with a very young member of the Opposition*] A young woman asks me a question I am always glad to see the young taking an interest in politics It is an impatient question; but it is a practical question, an intelligent question. She asks why we seek to lift a corner of the veil that shrouds the future from our feeble vision.

zoo I dont. I ask you to tell the oracle what you want, and not keep her sitting there all day

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*warmly*] Order, order!

zoo. What does "Order, order!" mean?

THE ENVOY. I ask the august oracle to listen to my voice—

zoo You people seem never to tire of listening to your voices; but it doesnt amuse us. What do you want?

THE ENVOY. I want, young woman, to be allowed to proceed without unseemly interruptions

A low roll of thunder comes from the abyss.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN There! Even the oracle is indignant [*To the Envoy*] Do not allow yourself to be put down by this lady's rude clamor. Ambrose. Take no notice Proceed

THE ENVOY'S WIFE I cant bear this much longer, Amby Remember *I havnt had any brandy*

HIS DAUGHTER [*trembling*] There are serpents curling in the vapor I am afraid of the lightning Finish it, Papa, or I shall die

THE ENVOY [*sternly*] Silence The destiny of British civilization is at stake Trust me I am not afraid As I was saying—where was I?

zoo I dont know Does anybody?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*tactfully*] You were just coming to the election, I think

THE ENVOY [*reassured*] Just so The election Now what we want to know is this ought we to dissolve in August, or put it off until next spring?

zoo Dissolve? In what? [*Thunder*] Oh! My fault this time That means that the oracle understands you, and desires me to hold my tongue

THE ENVOY [*fervently*] I thank the oracle

THE WIFE [*to Zoo*] Serve you right!

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Before the oracle replies, I should like to be allowed to state a few of the reasons why, in my opinion, the Government should hold on until the spring In the first—

Terrific lightning and thunder The Elderly Gentleman is knocked flat, but as he immediately sits up again dazedly it is clear that he is none the worse for the shock The ladies cover in terror The Envoy's hat is blown off, but he seizes it just as it quits his temples, and holds it on with both hands He is recklessly drunk, but quite articulate, as he seldom speaks in public without taking stimulants beforehand

THE ENVOY [*taking one hand from his hat to make a gesture of stilling the tempest*] Thats enough We know how to take a hint I'll put the case in three words I am the leader of the Potterbill party My party is in power I am Prime Minister The Opposition—the Rotterjacks—have won every bye-election for the last six months They—

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*scrambling heatedly to his feet*] Not by fair means By bribery, by misrepresentation, by pandering to the vilest prejudices [*muttered thunder*]—I beg your pardon [*He is silent*]

THE ENVOY Never mind the bribery and lies The oracle knows all about that. The point is that though our five years will not expire until the year after next, our majority will be eaten away at the bye-elections by about Easter We cant wait we must start

some question that will excite the public, and go to the country on it But some of us say do it now Others say wait til the spring We cant make up our minds one way or the other Which would you advise?

zoo But what is the question that is to excite your public?

THE ENVOY That doesnt matter I dont know yet We will find a question all right enough The oracle can foresee the future we cannot [*Thunder*] What does that mean? What have I done now?

zoo [*severely*] How often must you be told that we cannot foresee the future? There is no such thung as the future until it is the present

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Allow me to point out, madam, that when the Potterbill party sent to consult the oracle fifteen years ago, the oracle prophesied that the Potterbills would be victorious at the General Election, and they were So it is evident that the oracle can foresee the future, and is sometimes willing to reveal it

THE ENVOY Quite true Thank you, Poppa. I appeal now, over your head, young woman, direct to the August Oracle, to repeat the signal favor conferred on my illustrious predecessor, Sir Fuller Eastwind, and to answer me exactly as he was answered

The oracle raises her hand to command silence

ALL. Sh-sh-sh!

Invisible trombones utter three solemn blasts in the manner of Die Zauberflöte

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN May I—

zoo [*quickly*] Hush The oracle is going to speak

THE ORACLE Go home, poor fool

She vanishes, and the atmosphere changes to prosaic daylight Zoo comes off the railing, throws off her robe, makes a bundle of it, and tucks it under her arm The magic and mystery are gone The women rise to their feet The Envoy's party stare at one another helplessly

zoo The same reply, word for word, that your illustrious predecessor, as you call him, got fifteen years ago You asked for it, and you got it And just think of all the important questions you might have asked She would have answered them, you know It is always like that I will go and arrange to have you sent home you can wait for me in the entrance hall [*She goes out*]

THE ENVOY What possessed me to ask for the same answer old Eastwind got?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN But it was not the same answer The answer to Eastwind was an inspiration to our party for years. It won us the election

THE ENVOY'S DAUGHTER I learnt it at school, granpa It wasn't the same at all I can repeat it [*She quotes*] "When Britain was cradled in the west, the east wind hardened her and made her great Whilst the east wind prevails Britain shall prosper The east wind shall wither Britain's enemies in the day of contest. Let the Rotterjacks look to it."

THE ENVOY. The old man invented that I see it all. He was a doddering old ass when he came to consult the oracle. The oracle naturally said "Go home, poor fool" There was no sense in saying that to me, but as that girl said, I asked for it What else could the poor old chap do but fake up an answer fit for publication? There were whispers about it, but nobody believed them I believe them now

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN Oh, I cannot admit that Sir Fuller Eastwind was capable of such a fraud.

THE ENVOY He was capable of anything I knew his private secretary And now what are we going to say? You don't suppose I am going back to Baghdad to tell the British Empire that the oracle called me a fool, do you?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. Surely we must tell the truth, however painful it may be to our feelings

THE ENVOY I am not thinking of my feelings I am not so selfish as that, thank God I am thinking of the country of our party The truth, as you call it, would put the Rotterjacks in for the next twenty years It would be the end of me politically Not that I care for that I am only too willing to retire if you can find a better man Don't hesitate on my account

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. No, Ambrose you are indispensable There is no one else

THE ENVOY Very well, then What are you going to do?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN My dear Ambrose, you are the leader of the party, not I. What are you going to do?

THE ENVOY I am going to tell the exact truth, that's what I'm going to do. Do you take me for a liar?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*puzzled*] Oh I beg your pardon. I understood you to say—

THE ENVOY [*cutting him short*] You understood me to say that I am going back to Baghdad to tell the British electorate that the oracle repeated to me, word for word, what it said to Sir Fuller Eastwind fifteen years ago. Molly and Ethel can bear me out So must you, if you are an honest man Come on.

He goes out, followed by his wife and daughter.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN [*left alone and shrinking into an old and desolate figure*] What am I to do? I am a most perplexed and wretched man [*He falls on his knees, and stretches his hands in entreaty over the abyss*] I invoke the oracle I cannot go back and connive at a blasphemous lie I implore guidance

The Pythoness walks in on the gallery behind him, and touches him on the shoulder Her size is now natural Her face is hidden by her hood He flinches as if from an electric shock, turns to her, and covers, covering his eyes in terror.

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN No; not close to me I'm afraid I can't bear it

THE ORACLE [*with grave pity*] Come look at me I am my natural size now what you saw there was only a foolish picture of me thrown on a cloud by a lantern How can I help you?

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN They have gone back to lie about your answer I cannot go with them. I cannot live among people to whom nothing is real I have become incapable of it through my stay here I implore to be allowed to stay

THE ORACLE. My friend if you stay with us you will die of discouragement

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN If I go back I shall die of disgust and despair I take the nobler risk I beg you, do not cast me out.

He catches her robe and holds her

THE ORACLE Take care. I have been here one hundred and seventy years Your death does not mean to me what it means to you

THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN. It is the meaning of life, not of death, that makes banishment so terrible to me.

THE ORACLE Be it so, then. You may stay *She offers him her hands He grasps them and raises himself a little by clinging to her She looks steadily into his face. He stiffens, a little convulsion shakes him, his grasp relaxes, and he falls dead.*

THE ORACLE [*looking down at the body*] Poor shortlived thing! What else could I do for you?

PART V

AS FAR AS THOUGHT CAN
REACH

Summer afternoon in the year 31,920 A.D. A sunlit glade at the southern foot of a thickly wooded hill. On the west side of it, the steps and columned porch of a dainty little classic temple. Between it and the hill, arising path to the wooded heights begins with rough steps of stones in the moss. On the opposite side, a grove. In the middle of the glade, an altar in the form of a low marble table as long as a man, set parallel to the temple steps and pointing to the hill. Curved marble benches radiate from it into the foreground, but they are not joined to it there is plenty of space to pass between the altar and the benches.

A dance of youths and maidens is in progress. The music is provided by a few fluteplayers seated carelessly on the steps of the temple. There are no children, and none of the dancers seems younger than eighteen. Some of the youths have beards. Their dress, like the architecture of the theatre and the design of the altar and curved seats, resembles Grecian of the fourth century B.C., freely handled. They move with perfect balance and remarkable grace, racing through a figure like a farandole. They neither romp nor hug in our manner.

At the first full close they clap their hands to stop the musicians, who recommence with a sara-band, during which a strange figure appears on the path beyond the temple. He is deep in thought, with his eyes closed and his feet feeling automatically for the rough irregular steps as he slowly descends them. Except for a sort of linen kilt consisting mainly of a girdle carrying a sporran and a few minor pockets, he is naked. In physical hardihood and uprightness he seems to be in the prime of life, and his eyes and mouth shew no signs of age, but his face, though fully and firmly fleshed, bears a network of lines, varying from furrows to hairbreadth reticulations, as if Time had worked over every inch of it incessantly through whole geologic periods. His head is finely domed and utterly bald. Except for his eyelashes he is quite hairless. He is unconscious of his surroundings, and walks right into one of the dancing couples, separating them. He wakes up and stares about him. The couple stop indignantly. The rest stop. The music stops. The youth whom he has jostled accosts him without malice, but without anything that we should call manners.

THE YOUTH Now, then, ancient sleep-walker, why don't you keep your eyes open and mind where you are going?

THE ANCIENT [*mild, bland, and indulgent*] I did not know there was a nursery here, or I should not have turned my face in this direction. Such accidents cannot always be avoided. Go on with your play. I will turn back.

THE YOUTH Why not stay with us and enjoy life for once in a way? We will teach you to dance.

THE ANCIENT No, thank you. I danced when I was a child like you. Dancing is a very crude attempt to get into the rhythm of life. It would be painful to me to go back from that rhythm to your babyish gambols. In fact I could not do it if I tried. But at your age it is pleasant, and I am sorry I disturbed you.

THE YOUTH Come! own up. Aren't you very unhappy? It's dreadful to see you ancients going about by yourselves, never noticing anything, never dancing, never laughing, never singing, never getting anything out of life. None of us are going to be like that when we grow up. It's a dog's life.

THE ANCIENT Not at all. You repeat that old phrase without knowing that there was once a creature on earth called a dog. Those who are interested in extinct forms of life will tell you that it loved the sound of its own voice and bounded about when it was happy, just as you are doing here. It is you, my children, who are living the dog's life.

THE YOUTH The dog must have been a good sensible creature. It set you a very wise example. You should let yourself go occasionally and have a good time.

THE ANCIENT My children, be content to let us ancients go our ways and enjoy ourselves in our own fashion.

He turns to go.

THE MAIDEN But wait a moment. Why will you not tell us how you enjoy yourself? You must have secret pleasures that you hide from us, and that you never get tired of. I get tired of all our dances and all our tunes. I get tired of all my partners.

THE YOUTH [*suspiciously*] Do you? I shall bear that in mind.

They all look at one another as if there were some sinister significance in what she has said.

THE MAIDEN We all do. What is the use of pretending we don't? It is natural.

SEVERAL YOUNG PEOPLE No, no. We don't. It is not natural.

THE ANCIENT You are older than he is, I see You are growing up

THE MAIDEN How do you know? I do not look so much older, do I?

THE ANCIENT. Oh, I was not looking at you. Your looks do not interest me.

THE MAIDEN Thank you

They all laugh

THE YOUTH You old fish! I believe you dont know the difference between a man and a woman

THE ANCIENT It has long ceased to interest me in the way it interests you And when anything no longer interests us we no longer know it

THE MAIDEN You havnt told me how I shew my age That is what I want to know As a matter of fact I am older than this boy here older than he thinks. How did you find that out?

THE ANCIENT Easily enough You are ceasing to pretend that these childish games—this dancing and singing and mating—do not become tiresome and unsatisfying after a while And you no longer care to pretend that you are younger than you are These are the signs of adolescence And then, see these fantastic rags with which you have draped yourself [*He takes up a piece of her draperies in his hand*] It is rather badly worn here. Why do you not get a new one?

THE MAIDEN Oh, I did not notice it Besides, it is too much trouble. Clothes are a nuisance. I think I shall do without them some day, as you ancients do.

THE ANCIENT Signs of maturity Soon you will give up all these toys and games and sweets

THE YOUTH. What! And be as miserable as you?

THE ANCIENT Infant one moment of the ecstasy of life as we live it would strike you dead [*He stalks gravely out through the grove*]

They stare after him, much damped

THE YOUTH [*to the musicians*] Let us have another dance.

The musicians shake their heads, get up from their seats on the steps; and troop away into the temple. The others follow them, except the Maiden, who sits down on the altar.

A MAIDEN [*as she goes*] There! The ancient has put them out of countenance It is your fault, Strephon, for provoking him. [*She leaves, much disappointed*]

A YOUTH. Why need you have cheeked

him like that? [*He goes, grumbling*]

STREPHON [*calling after him*] I thought it was understood that we are always to cheek the ancients on principle

ANOTHER YOUTH Quite right too! There would be no holding them if we didnt. [*He goes*]

THE MAIDEN Why dont you really stand up to them? I did

ANOTHER YOUTH. Sheer, abject, pusillanimous, dastardly cowardice Thats why Face the filthy truth [*He goes*]

ANOTHER YOUTH [*turning on the steps as he goes out*] And dont you forget, infant, that one moment of the ecstasy of life as I live it would strike you dead. Haha!

STREPHON [*now the only one left, except the Maiden*] Arnt you coming, Chloe?

THE MAIDEN [*shakes her head*]

THE YOUTH [*hurrying back to her*] What is the matter?

THE MAIDEN [*tragically pensive*] I dont know.

THE YOUTH. Then there is something the matter. Is that what you mean?

THE MAIDEN Yes Something is happening to me I dont know what

THE YOUTH You no longer love me. I have seen it for a month past.

THE MAIDEN Dont you think all that is rather silly? We cannot go on as if this kind of thing, this dancing and sweethearting, were everything.

THE YOUTH What is there better? What else is there worth living for?

THE MAIDEN Oh, stuff! Dont be frivolous.

THE YOUTH. Something horrible is happening to you. You are losing all heart, all feeling [*He sits on the altar beside her and buries his face in his hands*] I am bitterly unhappy.

THE MAIDEN. Unhappy! Really, you must have a very empty head if there is nothing in it but a dance with one girl who is no better than any of the other girls.

THE YOUTH You did not always think so. You used to be vexed if I as much as looked at another girl.

THE MAIDEN. What does it matter what I did when I was a baby? Nothing existed for me then except what I tasted and touched and saw; and I wanted all that for myself, just as I wanted the moon to play with Now the world is opening out for me. More than the world the universe. Even little things are turning out to be great things, and becoming intensely interesting. Have you ever

thought about the properties of numbers?

THE YOUTH [*sitting up, markedly disenchanted*] Numbers!!! I cannot imagine anything drier or more repulsive

THE MAIDEN They are fascinating, just fascinating I want to get away from our eternal dancing and music, and just sit down by myself and think about numbers

THE YOUTH [*rising indignantly*] Oh, this is too much I have suspected you for some time past We have all suspected you All the girls say that you have deceived us as to your age that you are getting flat-chested, that you are bored with us, that you talk to the ancients when you get the chance Tell me the truth how old are you?

THE MAIDEN Just twice your age, my poor boy

THE YOUTH Twice my age! Do you mean to say you are four?

THE MAIDEN Very nearly four

THE YOUTH [*collapsing on the altar with a groan*] Oh!

THE MAIDEN My poor Strephon I pretended I was only two for your sake I was two when you were born. I saw you break from your shell, and you were such a charming child! You ran round and talked to us all so prettily, and were so handsome and well grown, that I lost my heart to you at once But now I seem to have lost it altogether bigger things are taking possession of me Still, we were very happy in our childish way for the first year, weren't we?

STREPHON I was happy until you began cooling towards me

THE MAIDEN Not towards you, but towards all the trivialities of our life here Just think. I have hundreds of years to live perhaps thousands Do you suppose I can spend centuries dancing, listening to flutes ringing changes on a few tunes and a few notes, raving about the beauty of a few pillars and arches, making jungles with words, lying about with your arms round me, which is really neither comfortable nor convenient; everlastingly choosing colors for dresses, and putting them on, and washing, making a business of sitting together at fixed hours to absorb our nourishment; taking little poisons with it to make us delirious enough to imagine we are enjoying ourselves; and then having to pass the nights in shelters lying in cots and losing half our lives in a state of unconsciousness Sleep is a shameful

thing I have not slept at all for weeks past I have stolen out at night when you were all lying insensible—quite disgusting, I call it—and wandered about the woods, thinking, thinking, thinking, grasping the world, taking it to pieces, building it up again, devising methods, planning experiments to test the methods, and having a glorious time Every morning I have come back here with greater and greater reluctance, and I know that the time will soon come—perhaps it has come already—when I shall not come back at all

STREPHON How horribly cold and uncomfortable!

THE MAIDEN Oh, don't talk to me of comfort! Life is not worth living if you have to bother about comfort. Comfort makes winter a torture, spring an illness, summer an oppression, and autumn only a respite The ancients could make life one long frowsty comfort if they chose But they never lift a finger to make themselves comfortable They will not sleep under a roof They will not clothe themselves a girdle with a few pockets hanging to it to carry things about in is all they wear they will sit down on the wet moss or in a gorse bush when there is dry heather within two yards of them Two years ago, when you were born, I did not understand this Now I feel that I would not put myself to the trouble of walking two paces for all the comfort in the world

STREPHON But you don't know what this means to me It means that you are dying to me yes, just dying Listen to me [*He puts his arm around her*]

THE MAIDEN [*extricating herself*] Don't We can talk quite as well without touching one another

STREPHON [*horrified*] Chloe! Oh, this is the worst symptom of all! The ancients never touch one another

THE MAIDEN Why should they?

STREPHON Oh, I don't know But don't you want to touch me? You used to

THE MAIDEN Yes that is true I used to We used to think it would be nice to sleep in one another's arms, but we never could go to sleep because our weight stopped our circulations just above the elbows Then somehow my feeling began to change bit by bit I kept a sort of interest in your head and arms long after I lost interest in your whole body And now that has gone

STREPHON. You no longer care for me at all,

then?

THE MAIDEN Nonsense! I care for you much more seriously than before, though perhaps not so much for you in particular. I mean I care more for everybody. But I don't want to touch you unnecessarily; and I certainly don't want you to touch me.

STREPHON [*rising decisively*] That finishes it. You dislike me.

THE MAIDEN [*impatiently*] I tell you again, I do not dislike you, but you bore me when you cannot understand; and I think I shall be happier by myself in future. You had better get a new companion. What about the girl who is to be born today?

STREPHON I do not want the girl who is to be born today. How do I know what she will be like? I want you.

THE MAIDEN. You cannot have me. You must recognize facts and face them. It is no use running after a woman twice your age. I cannot make my childhood last to please you. The age of love is sweet; but it is short; and I must pay nature's debt. You no longer attract me; and I no longer care to attract you. Growth is too rapid at my age. I am maturing from week to week.

STREPHON You are maturing, as you call it—I call it ageing—from minute to minute. You are going much further than you did when we began this conversation.

THE MAIDEN It is not the ageing that is so rapid. It is the realization of it when it has actually happened. Now that I have made up my mind to the fact that I have left childhood behind me, it comes home to me in leaps and bounds with every word you say.

STREPHON But your vow. Have you forgotten that? We all swore together in that temple—the temple of love. You were more earnest than any of us.

THE MAIDEN [*with a grim smile*] Never to let our hearts grow cold! Never to become as the ancients! Never to let the sacred lamp be extinguished! Never to change or forget! To be remembered for ever as the first company of true lovers faithful to this vow so often made and broken by past generations! Ha! ha! Oh, dear!

STREPHON Well, you need not laugh. It is a beautiful and holy compact; and I will keep it whilst I live. Are you going to break it?

THE MAIDEN. Dear child, it has broken itself. The change has come in spite of my childish vow. [*She rises*] Do you mind if I go

into the woods for a walk by myself? This chat of ours seems to me an unbearable waste of time. I have so much to think of.

STREPHON [*again collapsing on the altar and covering his eyes with his hands*] My heart is broken. [*He weeps*]

THE MAIDEN [*with a shrug*] I have luckily got through my childhood without that experience. It shews how wise I was to choose a lover half my age. [*She goes towards the grove, and is disappearing among the trees, when another youth, older and manlier than Strephon, with crisp hair and firm arms, comes from the temple, and calls to her from the threshold*]

THE TEMPLE YOUTH I say, Chloe. Is there any sign of the Ancient yet? The hour of birth is overdue. The baby is kicking like mad. She will break her shell prematurely.

THE MAIDEN [*looks across to the hill path, then points up it, and says*] She is coming, Acis.

The Maiden turns away through the grove and is lost to sight among the trees.

ACIS [*coming to Strephon*] What's the matter? Has Chloe been unkind?

STREPHON She has grown up in spite of all her promises. She deceived us about her age. She is four.

ACIS Four! I am sorry, Strephon. I am getting on for three myself; and I know what old age is. I hate to say "I told you so", but she was getting a little hard set and flat-chested and thin on the top, wasn't she?

STREPHON [*breaking down*] Don't.

ACIS. You must pull yourself together. This is going to be a busy day. First the birth. Then the Festival of the Artists.

STREPHON [*rising*] What is the use of being born if we have to decay into unnatural, heartless, loveless, joyless monsters in four short years? What use are the artists if they cannot bring their beautiful creations to life? I have a great mind to die and have done with it all. [*He moves away to the corner of the curved seat farthest from the theatre, and throws himself moodily into it*]

An Ancient Woman has descended the hill path during Strephon's lament, and has heard most of it. She is like the He-Ancient, equally bald, and equally without sexual charm, but intensely interesting and rather terrifying. Her sex is discoverable only by her voice, as her breasts are manly, and her figure otherwise not very different. She wears no clothes, but has draped herself rather perfunctorily with a ceremonial robe, and carries two implements like long slender

saws *She comes to the altar between the two young men*

THE SHE-ANCIENT [to Strephon] Infant you are only at the beginning of it all [To Acis] Is the child ready to be born?

ACIS More than ready, Ancient Shouting and kicking and cursing We have called to her to be quiet and wait until you come, but of course she only half understands, and is very impatient

THE SHE-ANCIENT Very well Bring her out into the sun.

ACIS [going quickly into the temple] All ready Come along

Joyous processional music strikes up in the temple

THE SHE-ANCIENT [going close to Strephon] Look at me

STREPHON [sulkily keeping his face averted] Thank you, but I don't want to be cured I had rather be miserable in my own way than callous in yours

THE SHE-ANCIENT You like being miserable? You will soon grow out of that [She returns to the altar]

The procession, headed by Acis, emerges from the temple Six youths carry on their shoulders a burden covered with a gorgeous but light pall Before them certain official maidens carry a new tunic, ewers of water, silver dishes pierced with holes, cloths, and immense sponges The rest carry wands with ribbons, and strew flowers The burden is deposited on the altar, and the pall removed It is a huge egg

THE SHE-ANCIENT [freeing her arms from her robe, and placing her saws on the altar ready to her hand in a businesslike manner] A girl, I think you said?

ACIS Yes

THE TUNIC BEARER It is a shame Why can't we have more boys?

SEVERAL YOUTHS [protesting] Not at all More girls We want new girls

A GIRL'S VOICE FROM THE EGG Let me out Let me out I want to be born I want to be born. [The egg rocks]

ACIS [snatching a wand from one of the others and whacking the egg with it] Be quiet, I tell you. Wait You will be born presently

THE EGG No, no at once, at once I want to be born I want to be born [Violent kicking within the egg, which rocks so hard that it has to be held on the altar by the bearers]

THE SHE-ANCIENT Silence [The music stops, and the egg behaves itself]

The She-Ancient takes her two saws, and with a couple of strokes rips the egg open The Newly Born, a pretty girl who would have been guessed as seventeen in our day, sits up in the broken shell, exquisitely fresh and rosy, but with filaments of spare albumen clinging to her here and there

THE NEWLY BORN [as the world bursts on her vision] Oh! Oh! Oh!!! Oh!!!! [She continues thus ad libitum during the following remonstrances]

ACIS Hold your noise, will you?

The washing begins The Newly Born shrieks and struggles

A YOUTH Lie quiet, you clammy little devil.

A MAIDEN. You must be washed, dear Now quiet, quiet, quiet be good

ACIS Shut your mouth, or I'll shove the sponge in it

THE MAIDEN Shut your eyes It'll hurt if you don't

ANOTHER MAIDEN Don't be silly One would think nobody had ever been born before

THE NEWLY BORN [yells]!!!!!!

ACIS Serve you right! You were told to shut your eyes

THE YOUTH Dry her off quick. I can hardly hold her Shut will you, or I'll smack you into a pickled cabbage

The dressing begins The Newly Born chuckles with delight

THE MAIDEN Your arms go here, dear Isn't it pretty? You'll look lovely

THE NEWLY BORN [rapturously] Oh! Oh! Oh!!! Oh!!!!

ANOTHER YOUTH No the other arm you're putting it on back to front You are a silly little beast

ACIS Here! That's it Now you're clean and decent. Up with you! Oopsh! [He hauls her to her feet She cannot walk at first, but masters it after a few steps]

Now then march Here she is, Ancient put her through the catechism

THE SHE-ANCIENT What name have you chosen for her?

ACIS Amaryllis

THE SHE-ANCIENT [to the Newly Born] Your name is Amaryllis

THE NEWLY BORN What does it mean?

A YOUTH Love

A MAIDEN Mother

ANOTHER YOUTH Lilies

THE NEWLY BORN [to Acis] What is your name?

ACIS Acis

THE NEWLY BORN I love you, Acis I must have you all to myself Take me in your arms

ACIS Steady, young one I am three years old.

THE NEWLY BORN What has that to do with it? I love you; and I must have you or I will go back into my shell again

ACIS You cant It's broken. Look here [*pointing to Strephon, who has remained in his seat without looking round at the birth, wrapped up in his sorrow*]¹ Look at this poor fellow!

THE NEWLY BORN. What is the matter with him?

ACIS When he was born he chose a girl two years old for his sweetheart. He is two years old now himself, and already his heart is broken because she is four That means that she has grown up like this Ancient here, and has left him. If you choose me, we shall have only a year's happiness before I break your heart by growing up Better choose the youngest you can find

THE NEWLY BORN I will not choose anyone but you You must not grow up. We will love one another for ever [*They all laugh*] What are you laughing at?

THE SHE-ANCIENT Listen, child—

THE NEWLY BORN Do not come near me, you dreadful old creature You frighten me.

ACIS. Just give her another moment She is not quite reasonable yet What can you expect from a child less than five minutes old?

THE NEWLY BORN I think I feel a little more reasonable now Of course I was rather young when I said that; but the inside of my head is changing very rapidly. I should like to have things explained to me

ACIS [*to the She-Ancient*] Is she all right, do you think?

The She-Ancient looks at the Newly Born critically, feels her bumps like a phrenologist, grips her muscles and shakes her limbs, examines her teeth, looks into her eyes for a moment, and finally relinquishes her with an air of having finished her job

THE SHE-ANCIENT She will do She may live. *They all wave their hands and shout for joy.*

THE NEWLY BORN [*indignant*] I may live! Suppose there had been anything wrong with me?

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Children with anything wrong do not live here, my child Life is not cheap with us But you would not have felt anything

THE NEWLY BORN You mean that you would have murdered me!

THE SHE-ANCIENT. That is one of the funny words the newly born bring with them out of the past. You will forget it tomorrow Now listen You have four years of childhood before you. You will not be very happy, but you will be interested and amused by the novelty of the world; and your companions here will teach you how to keep up an imitation of happiness during your four years by what they call arts and sports and pleasures The worst of your troubles is already over.

THE NEWLY BORN What! In five minutes?

THE SHE-ANCIENT. No you have been growing for two years in the egg You began by being several sorts of creatures that no longer exist, though we have fossils of them Then you became human; and you passed in fifteen months through a development that once cost human beings twenty years of awkward stumbling immaturity after they were born. They had to spend fifty years more in the sort of childhood you will complete in four years And then they died of decay. But you need not die until your accident comes

THE NEWLY BORN. What is my accident?

THE SHE-ANCIENT Sooner or later you will fall and break your neck; or a tree will fall on you; or you will be struck by lightning Something or other must make an end of you some day.

THE NEWLY BORN. But why should any of these things happen to me?

THE SHE-ANCIENT There is no why They do Everything happens to everybody sooner or later if there is time enough And with us there is eternity.

THE NEWLY BORN Nothing need happen I never heard such nonsense in all my life. I shall know how to take care of myself.

THE SHE-ANCIENT So you think.

THE NEWLY BORN. I dont think. I know. I shall enjoy life for ever and ever

THE SHE-ANCIENT. If you should turn out to be a person of infinite capacity, you will no doubt find life infinitely interesting However, all you have to do now is to play with your companions. They have many pretty toys, as you see. a playhouse, pictures, images, flowers, bright fabrics, music above all, themselves, for the most amusing child's toy is another child At the end of four years, your mind will change. you will become wise; and then you will be entrusted with power.

THE NEWLY BORN But I want power now.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. No doubt you do; so that

you could play with the world by tearing it to pieces

THE NEWLY BORN Only to see how it is made I should put it all together again much better than before

THE SHE-ANCIENT There was a time when children were given the world to play with because they promised to improve it They did not improve it, and they would have wrecked it had their power been as great as that which you will wield when you are no longer a child Until then your young companions will instruct you in whatever is necessary You are not forbidden to speak to the ancients, but you had better not do so, as most of them have long ago exhausted all the interest there is in observing children and conversing with them [*She turns to go*]

THE NEWLY BORN Wait Tell me some things that I ought to do and ought not to do I feel the need of education.

They all laugh at her, except the She-Ancient

THE SHE-ANCIENT You will have grown out of that by tomorrow Do what you please [*She goes away up the hill path*]

The officials take their paraphernalia and the fragments of the egg back into the temple

ACIS Just fancy that old girl has been going for seven hundred years and hasn't had her fatal accident yet, and she is not a bit tired of it all

THE NEWLY BORN How could anyone ever get tired of life?

ACIS They do That is, of the same life They manage to change themselves in a wonderful way You meet them sometimes with a lot of extra heads and arms and legs they make you split laughing at them Most of them have forgotten how to speak the ones that attend to us have to brush up their knowledge of the language once a year or so Nothing makes any difference to them that I can see They never enjoy themselves I don't know how they can stand it They don't even come to our festivals of the arts That old one who saw you out of your shell has gone off to muddle about doing nothing, though she knows that this is Festival Day

THE NEWLY BORN What is Festival Day?

ACIS Two of our greatest sculptors are bringing us their latest masterpieces, and we are going to crown them with flowers and sing dithyrambs to them and dance round them

THE NEWLY BORN How jolly! What is a

sculptor?

ACIS. Listen here, young one You must find out things for yourself, and not ask questions For the first day or two you must keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut. Children should be seen and not heard.

THE NEWLY BORN Who are you calling a child? I am fully quarter of an hour old. [*She sits down on the curved bench near Strephon with her maturest air*]

VOICES IN THE TEMPLE [*all expressing protest, disappointment, disgust*] Oh! Oh! Scandalous Shameful, Disgraceful What filth! Is this a joke? Why, they're ancients! Ss-s-s-sss! Are you mad, Arjilla? This is an outrage An insult Yah! etc etc etc [*The malcontents appear on the steps, grumbling*]

ACIS Hullo! what's the matter? [*He goes to the steps of the temple*]

The two sculptors issue from the temple One has a beard two feet long the other is beardless Between them comes a handsome nymph with marked features, dark hair richly waved, and authoritative bearing

THE AUTHORITATIVE NYMPH [*swooping down to the centre of the glade with the sculptors, between Acis and the Newly Born*] Do not try to browbeat me, Arjillax, merely because you are clever with your hands Can you play the flute?

ARJILLAX [*the bearded sculptor on her right*] No, Ecrasia I cannot What has that to do with it? [*He is half derisive, half impatient, wholly resolved not to take her seriously in spite of her beauty and imposing tone*]

ECRASIA Well, have you ever hesitated to criticize our best flute players, and to declare whether their music is good or bad? Pray have I not the same right to criticize your busts, though I cannot make images any more than you can play?

ARJILLAX. Any fool can play the flute, or play anything else, if he practises enough, but sculpture is a creative art, not a mere business of whistling into a pipe The sculptor must have something of the god in him. From his hand comes a form which reflects a spirit He does not make it to please you, nor even to please himself, but because he must You must take what he gives you, or leave it if you are not worthy of it

ECRASIA [*scornfully*] Not worthy of it! Ho! May I not leave it because it is not worthy of me?

ARJILLAX. Of you! Hold your silly tongue,

you conceited humbug What do you know about it?

ECRASIA. I know what every person of culture knows that the business of the artist is to create beauty. Until today your works have been full of beauty; and I have been the first to point that out.

ARJILLAX. Thank you for nothing People have eyes, havnt they, to see what is as plain as the sun in the heavens without your pointing it out?

ECRASIA You were very glad to have it pointed out You did not call me a conceited humbug then You stifled me with caresses You modelled me as the genius of art presiding over the infancy of your master here [*indicating the other sculptor*], Martellus

MARTELLUS [*a silent and meditative listener, shudders and shakes his head, but says nothing*]

ARJILLAX [*quarrelsomely*] I was taken in by your talk

ECRASIA. I discovered your genius before anyone else did Is that true, or is it not?

ARJILLAX Everybody knew I was an extraordinary person When I was born my beard was three feet long

ECRASIA Yes, and it has shrunk from three feet to two Your genius seems to have been in the last foot of your beard, for you have lost both

MARTELLUS [*with a short sardonic cachinnation*] Ha! My beard was three and a half feet long when I was born; and a flash of lightning burnt it off and killed the ancient who was delivering me Without a hair on my chin I became the greatest sculptor in ten generations.

ECRASIA And yet you come to us today with empty hands. We shall actually have to crown Arjillax here because no other sculptor is exhibiting

ACIS [*returning from the temple steps to behind the curved seat on the right of the three*] Whats the row, Ecrasia? Why have you fallen out with Arjillax?

ECRASIA He has insulted us! outraged us! profaned his art! You know how much we hoped from the twelve busts he placed in the temple to be unveiled today. Well, go in and look at them. That is all I have to say. [*She sweeps to the curved seat, and sits down just where Acis is leaning over it*]

ACIS I am no great judge of sculpture Art is not my line. What is wrong with the busts?

ECRASIA Wrong with them! Instead of being ideally beautiful nymphs and youths, they are horribly realistic studies of—but I really cannot bring my lips to utter it

The Newly Born, full of curiosity, runs to the temple, and peeps in

ACIS Oh, stow it, Ecrasia. Your lips are not so squeamish as all that Studies of what?

THE NEWLY BORN [*from the temple steps*] Ancients

ACIS [*surprised but not scandalized*] Ancients!

ECRASIA Yes, ancients. The one subject that is by the universal consent of all connoisseurs absolutely excluded from the fine arts [*To Arjillax*] How can you defend such a proceeding?

ARJILLAX If you come to that, what interest can you find in the statues of smirking nymphs and posturing youths you stick up all over the place?

ECRASIA You did not ask that when your hand was still skilful enough to model them

ARJILLAX Skilful! You high-nosed idiot, I could turn such things out by the score with my eyes bandaged and one hand tied behind me But what use would they be? They would bore me; and they would bore you if you had any sense Go in and look at my busts Look at them again and yet again until you receive the full impression of the intensity of mind that is stamped on them; and then go back to the pretty-pretty confectionery you call sculpture, and see whether you can endure its vapid emptiness [*He mounts the altar impetuously*] Listen to me, all of you; and do you, Ecrasia, be silent if you are capable of silence.

ECRASIA Silence is the most perfect expression of scorn Scorn! That is what I feel for your revolting busts.

ARJILLAX Fool the busts are only the beginning of a mighty design. Listen.

ACIS Go ahead, old sport We are listening.

Martellus stretches himself on the sward beside the altar The Newly Born sits on the temple steps with her chin on her hands, ready to devour the first oration she has ever heard. The rest sit or stand at ease.

ARJILLAX. In the records which generations of children have rescued from the stupid neglect of the ancients, there has come down to us a fable which, like many fables, is not a thing that was done in the past, but a thing that is to be done in the future. It is a legend of a supernatural being called the Archangel

THE NEWLY BORN [*flings her arms round his neck and kisses him enthusiastically*]

MARTELLUS [*rises; carries her to the curved bench on his left, deposits her beside Strephon as if she were his overcoat, and continues without the least change of tone*] Shape it as you will, marble remains marble, and the graven image an idol. As I have broken my idols, and cast away my chisel and modelling tools, so will you too break these busts of yours.

ARJILLAX Never.

MARTELLUS. Wait, my friend I do not come empty-handed today, as you imagined On the contrary, I bring with me such a work of art as you have never seen, and an artist who has surpassed both you and me further than we have surpassed all our competitors

ECRASIA Impossible. The greatest things in art can never be surpassed

ARJILLAX Who is this paragon whom you declare greater than I?

MARTELLUS I declare him greater than myself, Arjillax

ARJILLAX [*frowning*] I understand. Sooner than not drown me, you are willing to clasp me round the waist and jump overboard with me

ACIS Oh, stop squabbling That is the worst of you artists. You are always in little squabbling cliques; and the worst cliques are those which consist of one man Who is this new fellow you are throwing in one another's teeth?

ARJILLAX Ask Martellus, do not ask me I know nothing of him [*He leaves Martellus, and sits down beside Ecrasia, on her left*].

MARTELLUS You know him quite well Pygmalion

ECRASIA [*indignantly*] Pygmalion! That soulless creature! A scientist! A laboratory person!

ARJILLAX. Pygmalion produce a work of art! You have lost your artistic senses. The man is utterly incapable of modelling a thumb nail, let alone a human figure.

MARTELLUS That does not matter. I have done the modelling for him

ARJILLAX What on earth do you mean?

MARTELLUS [*calling*] Pygmalion, come forth Pygmalion, a square-fingered youth with his face laid out in horizontal blocks, and a perpetual smile of eager benevolent interest in everything, and expectation of equal interest from everybody else, comes from the temple to the centre of the

group, who regard him for the most part with dismay, as dreading that he will bore them Ecrasia is openly contemptuous

MARTELLUS. Friends it is unfortunate that Pygmalion is constitutionally incapable of exhibiting anything without first giving a lecture about it to explain it; but I promise you that if you will be patient he will shew you the two most wonderful works of art in the world, and that they will contain some of my own very best workmanship. Let me add that they will inspire a loathing that will cure you of the lunacy of art for ever [*He sits down next the Newly Born, who pouts and turns a very cold right shoulder to him, a demonstration utterly lost on him*].

Pygmalion, with the smile of a simpleton, and the eager confidence of a fanatical scientist, climbs awkwardly on to the altar They prepare for the worst.

PYGMALION My friends I will omit the algebra—

ACIS Thank God!

PYGMALION [*continuing*]—because Martellus has made me promise to do so To come to the point, I have succeeded in making artificial human beings Real live ones, I mean.

INCREDULOUS VOICES Oh, come! Tell us another Really, Pyg! Get out You havnt What a lie!

PYGMALION. I tell you I have. I will shew them to you It has been done before One of the very oldest documents we possess mentions a tradition of a biologist who extracted certain unspecified minerals from the earth and, as it quaintly expresses it, "breathed into their nostrils the breath of life" This is the only tradition from the primitive ages which we can regard as really scientific There are later documents which specify the minerals with great precision, even to their atomic weights; but they are utterly unscientific, because they overlook the element of life which makes all the difference between a mere mixture of salts and gases and a living organism These mixtures were made over and over again in the crude laboratories of the Silly-Clever Ages, but nothing came of them until the ingredient which the old chronicler called the breath of life was added by this very remarkable early experimenter In my view he was the founder of biological science

ARJILLAX Is that all we know about him? It doesnt amount to very much, does it?

PYGMALION There are some fragments of pictures and documents which represent him as walking in a garden and advising people to cultivate their gardens. His name has come down to us in several forms. One of them is Jove. Another is Voltaire.

ECRASIA You are boring us to distraction with your Voltaire. What about your human beings?

ARJILLAX. Aye, come to them.

PYGMALION I assure you that these details are intensely interesting. [*Cries of No! They are not! Come to the human beings! Consuez Voltaire! Cut it short, Pyg! interrupt him from all sides*] You will see their bearing presently. I promise you I will not detain you long. We know, we children of science, that the universe is full of forces and powers and energies of one kind and another. The sap rising in a tree, the stone holding together in a definite crystalline structure, the thought of a philosopher holding his brain in form and operation with an inconceivably powerful grip, the urge of evolution—all these forces can be used by us. For instance, I use the force of gravitation when I put a stone on my tunic to prevent it being blown away when I am bathing. By substituting appropriate machines for the stone we have made not only gravitation our slave, but also electricity and magnetism, atomic attraction, repulsion, polarization, and so forth. But hitherto the vital force has eluded us, so it has had to create machinery for itself. It has created and developed bony structure of the requisite strength, and clothed them with cellular tissue of such amazing sensitiveness that the organs it forms will adapt their action to all the normal variations in the air they breathe, the food they digest, and the circumstances about which they have to think. Yet, as these live bodies, as we call them, are only machines after all, it must be possible to construct them mechanically.

ARJILLAX. Everything is possible. Have you done it? That is the question.

PYGMALION Yes. But that is a mere fact. What is interesting is the explanation of the fact. Forgive my saying so, but it is such a pity that you artists have no intellect.

ECRASIA [*sententiously*] I do not admit that. The artist divines by inspiration all the truths that the so-called scientist grubs up in his laboratory slowly and stupidly long afterwards.

ARJILLAX [*to Ecrasia, quarrelsome*] What do you know about it? You are not an artist.

ACIS Shut your heads, both of you. Let us have the artificial men. Trot them out, Pygmahon.

PYGMALION It is a man and a woman. But I really must explain first.

ALL [*groaning*]!!!

PYGMALION Yes. I—

ACIS We want results, not explanations.

PYGMALION [*hurt*] I see I am boring you. Not one of you takes the least interest in science. Goodbye. [*He descends from the altar and makes for the temple*].

SEVERAL YOUTHS AND MAIDENS [*rising and rushing to him*] No, no. Don't go. Don't be offended. We want to see the artificial pair. We will listen. We are tremendously interested. Tell us all about it.

PYGMALION [*relenting*] I shall not detain you two minutes.

ALL Half an hour if you like. Please go on, Pygmahon. [*They rush him back to the altar, and hoist him on to it*]. Up you go.

They return to their former places

PYGMALION As I told you, lots of attempts were made to produce protoplasm in the laboratory. Why were these synthetic plasmas as they called them, no use?

ECRASIA We are waiting for you to tell us.

THE NEWLY BORN [*modelling herself on Ecrasia, and trying to outdo her intellectually*] Clearly because they were dead.

PYGMALION Not bad for a baby, my pet. But dead and alive are very loose terms. You are not half as much alive as you will be in another month or so. What was wrong with the synthetic protoplasm was that it could not fix and conduct the Life Force. It was like a wooden magnet or a lightning conductor made of silk—it would not take the current.

ACIS Nobody but a fool would make a wooden magnet, and expect it to attract anything.

PYGMALION He might if he were so ignorant as not to be able to distinguish between wood and soft iron. In those days they were very ignorant of the differences between things because their methods of analysis were crude. They mixed up messes that were so like protoplasm that they could not tell the difference. But the difference was there, though their analysis was too superficial and incomplete to detect it. You must re-

member that these poor devils were very little better than our idiots. we should never dream of letting one of them survive the day of its birth. Why, the Newly Born there already knows by instinct many things that their greatest physicists could hardly arrive at by forty years of strenuous study. Her simple direct sense of space-time and quantity unconsciously solves problems which cost their most famous mathematicians years of prolonged and laborious calculations requiring such intense mental application that they frequently forgot to breathe when engaged in them, and almost suffocated themselves in consequence.

ECRASIA. Leave these obscure prehistoric abortions; and come back to your synthetic man and woman.

PYGMALION. When I undertook the task of making synthetic men, I did not waste my time on protoplasm. It was evident to me that if it were possible to make protoplasm in the laboratory, it must be equally possible to begin higher up and make fully evolved muscular and nervous tissues, bone, and so forth. Why make the seed when the making of the flower would be no greater miracle? I tried thousands of combinations before I succeeded in producing anything that would fix high-potential Life Force.

ARJILLAX. High what?

PYGMALION. High-po-tential. The Life Force is not so simple as you think. A high-potential current of it will turn a bit of dead tissue into a philosopher's brain. A low-potential current will reduce the same bit of tissue to a mass of corruption. Will you believe me when I tell you that, even in man himself, the Life Force used to slip suddenly down from its human level to that of a fungus, so that men found their flesh no longer growing as flesh, but proliferating horribly in a lower form which was called cancer, until the lower form of life killed the higher, and both perished together miserably?

MARTELLUS. Keep off the primitive tribes, Pygmalion. They interest you, but they bore these young things.

PYGMALION. I am only trying to make you understand. There was the Life Force raging all round me. There was I, trying to make organs that would capture it as a battery captures electricity, and tissues that would conduct it and operate it. It was easy enough to make eyes more perfect than our own,

and ears with a larger range of sound; but they could neither see nor hear, because they were not susceptible to the Life Force. But it was far worse when I discovered how to make them susceptible; for the first thing that happened was that they ceased to be eyes and ears and turned into heaps of maggots.

ECRASIA. Disgusting! Please stop.

ACIS. If you don't want to hear, go away. You go ahead, Pyg.

PYGMALION. I went ahead. You see, the lower potentials of the Life Force could make maggots, but not human eyes or ears. I improved the tissue until it was susceptible to a higher potential.

ARJILLAX [*intensely interested*]. Yes, and then?

PYGMALION. Then the eyes and ears turned into cancers.

ECRASIA. Oh, hideous!

PYGMALION. Not at all. That was a great advance. It encouraged me so much that I put aside the eyes and ears, and made a brain. It wouldn't take the Life Force at all until I had altered its constitution a dozen times, but when it did, it took a much higher potential, and did not dissolve, and neither did the eyes and ears when I connected them up with the brain. I was able to make a sort of monster: a thing without arms or legs; and it really and truly lived for half-an-hour.

THE NEWLY BORN. Half-an-hour! What good was that? Why did it die?

PYGMALION. Its blood went wrong. But I got that right, and then I went ahead with a complete human body. arms and legs and all. He was my first man.

ARJILLAX. Who modelled him?

PYGMALION. I did.

MARTELLUS. Do you mean to say you tried your own hand before you sent for me?

PYGMALION. Bless you, yes, several times. My first man was the ghastliest creature, a more dreadful mixture of horror and absurdity than you who have not seen him can conceive.

ARJILLAX. If you modelled him, he must indeed have been a spectacle.

PYGMALION. Oh, it was not his shape. You see I did not invent that. I took actual measurements and moulds from my own body. Sculptors do that sometimes, you know, though they pretend they don't.

MARTELLUS. Hm!

ARJILLAX. Hah!

PYGMALION He was all right to look at, at first, or nearly so But he behaved in the most appalling manner, and the subsequent developments were so disgusting that I really cannot describe them to you He seized all sorts of things and swallowed them He drank every fluid in the laboratory I tried to explain to him that he must take nothing that he could not digest and assimilate completely, but of course he could not understand me He assimilated a little of what he swallowed, but the process left horrible residues which he had no means of getting rid of His blood turned to poison, and he perished in torments, howling I then perceived that I had produced a prehistoric man, for there are certain traces in our own bodies of arrangements which enabled the earlier forms of mankind to renew their bodies by swallowing flesh and grains and vegetables and all sorts of unnatural and hideous foods, and getting rid of what they could not digest.

ECRASIA But what a pity he died! What a glimpse of the past we have lost! He could have told us stories of the Golden Age

PYGMALION Not he He was a most dangerous beast He was afraid of me, and actually tried to kill me by snatching up things and striking at me with them I had to give him two or three pretty severe shocks before I convinced him that he was at my mercy

THE NEWLY BORN Why did you not make a woman instead of a man? She would have known how to behave herself

MARTELLUS Why did you not make a man and a woman? Their children would have been interesting

PYGMALION I intended to make a woman, but after my experience with the man it was out of the question

ECRASIA Pray why?

PYGMALION Well, it is difficult to explain if you have not studied prehistoric methods of reproduction You see the only sort of men and women I could make were men and women just like us as far as their bodies were concerned That was how I killed the poor beast of a man I hadn't provided for his horrible prehistoric methods of feeding himself Suppose the woman had reproduced in some prehistoric way instead of being oviparous as we are? She couldn't have done it with a modern female body Besides the

experiment might have been painful.

ECRASIA Then you have nothing to shew us at all?

PYGMALION Oh yes I have I am not so easily beaten as that I set to work again for months to find out how to make a digestive system that would deal with waste products and a reproductive system capable of internal nourishment and incubation

ECRASIA Why did you not find out how to make them like us?

STREPHON [*crying out in his grief for the first time*] Why did you not make a woman whom you could love? That was the secret you needed.

THE NEWLY BORN Oh yes. How true! How great of you, darling Strephon! [*She kisses him impulsively*]

STREPHON [*passionately*] Let me alone

MARTELLUS Control your reflexes, child.

THE NEWLY BORN My what!

MARTELLUS Your reflexes The things you do without thinking Pygmalion is going to shew you a pair of human creatures who are all reflexes and nothing else Take warning by them

THE NEWLY BORN But won't they be alive, like us?

PYGMALION That is a very difficult question to answer, my dear I confess I thought at first I had created living creatures, but Martellus declares they are only automata. But then Martellus is a mystic I am a man of science He draws a line between an automaton and a living organism I cannot draw that line to my own satisfaction

MARTELLUS Your artificial men have no self-control They only respond to stimuli from without.

PYGMALION But they are conscious I have taught them to talk and read, and now they tell lies That is so very lifelike

MARTELLUS Not at all If they were alive they would tell the truth You can provoke them to tell any silly lie, and you can foresee exactly the sort of lie they will tell. Give them a clip below the knee, and they will jerk their foot forward Give them a clip in their appetites or vanities or any of their lusts and greeds, and they will boast and lie, and affirm and deny, and hate and love without the slightest regard to the facts that are staring them in the face, or to their own obvious limitations That proves that they are automata

PYGMALION [*unconvinced*] I know, dear old chap; but there really is some evidence that we are descended from creatures quite as limited and absurd as these. After all, the baby there is three-quarters an automaton. Look at the way she has been going on!

THE NEWLY BORN [*indignantly*] What do you mean? How have I been going on?

ECRASIA If they have no regard for truth, they can have no real vitality.

PYGMALION Truth is sometimes so artificial, so relative, as we say in the scientific world, that it is very hard to feel quite sure that what is false and even ridiculous to us may not be true to them.

ECRASIA I ask you again, why did you not make them like us? Would any true artist be content with less than the best?

PYGMALION. I couldn't. I tried. I failed. I am convinced that what I am about to shew you is the very highest living organism that can be produced in the laboratory. The best tissues we can manufacture will not take as high potentials as the natural product: that is where Nature beats us. You don't seem to understand, any of you, what an enormous triumph it was to produce consciousness at all.

ACIS Cut the cackle; and come to the synthetic couple.

SEVERAL YOUTHS AND MAIDENS Yes, yes. No more talking. Let us have them. Dry up, Pyg, and fetch them along. Come on out with them! The synthetic couple. the synthetic couple.

PYGMALION [*waving his hands to appease them*] Very well, very well. Will you please whistle for them? They respond to the stimulus of a whistle.

All who can, whistle like streetboys

ECRASIA [*makes a wry face and puts her fingers in her ears*]

PYGMALION Sh-sh-sh! That's enough. That's enough. That's enough. [*Silence*] Now let us have some music. A dance tune. Not too fast.

The flutists play a quiet dance

MARTELLUS Prepare yourselves for something ghastly.

Two figures, a man and woman of noble appearance, beautifully modelled and splendidly attired, emerge hand in hand from the temple. Seeing that all eyes are fixed on them, they halt on the steps, smiling with gratified vanity. The woman is on the man's left.

PYGMALION [*rubbing his hands with the purring satisfaction of a creator*] This way, please.

The Figures advance condescendingly and pose themselves centrally between the curved seats

PYGMALION. Now if you will be so good as to oblige us with a little something. You dance so beautifully, you know. [*He sits down next Martellus, and whispers to him*] It is extraordinary how sensitive they are to the stimulus of flattery.

The Figures, with a gracious air, dance pompously, but very passably. At the close they bow to one another

ON ALL HANDS [*clapping*] Bravo! Thank you. Wonderful! Splendid! Perfect.

The Figures acknowledge the applause in an obvious condition of swelled head.

THE NEWLY BORN Can they make love?

PYGMALION Yes they can respond to every stimulus. They have all the reflexes. Put your arm round the man's neck, and he will put his arm round your body. He cannot help it.

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*frowning*] Round mine, you mean.

PYGMALION Yours, too, of course, if the stimulus comes from you.

ECRASIA Cannot he do anything original?

PYGMALION No. But then, you know, I do not admit that any of us can do anything really original, though Martellus thinks we can.

ACIS Can he answer a question?

PYGMALION Oh yes. A question is a stimulus, you know. Ask him one.

ACIS [*to the Male Figure*] What do you think of what you see around you? Of us, for instance, and our ways and doings?

THE MALE FIGURE I have not seen the newspaper today.

THE FEMALE FIGURE How can you expect my husband to know what to think of you if you give him his breakfast without his paper?

MARTELLUS. You see. He is a mere automaton.

THE NEWLY BORN. I don't think I should like him to put his arm round my neck. I don't like them. [*The Male Figure looks offended, and the Female jealous*] Oh, I thought they couldn't understand. Have they feelings?

PYGMALION Of course they have. I tell you they have all the reflexes.

THE NEWLY BORN. But feelings are not reflexes.

PYGMALION. They are sensations. When the rays of light enter their eyes and make a picture on their retinas, their brains become conscious of the picture and they act accord-

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

ingly When the waves of sound started by your speaking enter their ears and record a disparaging remark on their keyboards, their brains become conscious of the disparagement and resent it accordingly If you did not disparage them they would not resent it They are merely responding to a stimulus

THE MALE FIGURE We are part of a cosmic system Free will is an illusion We are the children of Cause and Effect We are the Unalterable, the Irresistible, the Irresponsible, the Inevitable
My name is Ozymandias, king of kings
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair
There is a general stir of curiosity at this

ACIS What the dickens does he mean?
THE MALE FIGURE Silence, base accident of Nature This *[taking the hand of the Female Figure and introducing her]* is Cleopatra-Semiramis, consort of the king of kings, and therefore queen of queens Ye are things hatched from eggs by the brainless sun and the blind fire, but the king of kings and queen of queens are not accidents of the egg they are thought-out and hand-made to receive the sacred Life Force There is one person of the king and one of the queen, but the Life Force of the king and queen is all one the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal Such as the king is so is the queen, the king thought-out and hand-made, the queen thought-out and hand-made The actions of the king are caused, and therefore determined, from the beginning of the world to the end, and the actions of the queen are likewise The king logical and predetermined and inevitable, and the queen logical and predetermined and inevitable And yet they are not two logical and predetermined inevitable, but one logical and predetermined and inevitable Therefore confound not the persons, nor divide the substance, but worship us twain as one throne, two in one and one in two, lest by error ye fall into irretrievable damnation

THE FEMALE FIGURE And if any say unto you "Which one?" remember that though there is one person of the king and one of the queen, yet these two persons are not alike, but are woman and man, and that as woman was created after man, the skill and practice gained in making him were added to her, wherefore she is to be exalted above him in all personal respects, and—
THE MALE FIGURE Peace, woman, for this is

a damnable heresy. Both Man and Woman are what they are and must do what they must according to the eternal laws of Cause and Effect Look to your words, for if they enter my ear and jar too repugnantly on my sensorium, who knows that the inevitable response to that stimulus may not be a message to my muscles to snatch up some heavy object and break you in pieces

The Female Figure picks up a stone and is about to throw it at her consort
ARJILLAX *[springing up and shouting to Pygmalion, who is fondly watching the Male Figure]* Look out, Pygmalion! Look at the woman! Pygmalion, seeing what is happening, hurls himself on the Female Figure and wrenches the stone out of her hand

All spring up in consternation
ARJILLAX She meant to kill him
STREPHON This is horrible

THE FEMALE FIGURE *[wrestling with Pygmalion]* Let me go Let me go, will you *[she bites his hand]*

PYGMALION *[releasing her and staggering]* Oh! A general shriek of horror echoes his exclamation He turns deadly pale, and supports himself against the end of the curved seat

THE FEMALE FIGURE *[to her consort]* You would stand there and let me be treated like this, you unmanly coward.
Pygmalion falls dead

THE NEWLY BORN Oh! What's the matter? Why did he fall? What has happened to him? They look on anxiously as Martellus kneels down and examines the body of Pygmalion

MARTELLUS She has bitten a piece out of his hand nearly as large as a finger nail, enough to kill ten men There is no pulse, no breath

ECRASIA But his thumb is clinched
MARTELLUS No it has just straightened out See! He has gone Poor Pygmalion!

THE NEWLY BORN Oh! *[She weeps]*
STREPHON Hush, dear that's childish
THE NEWLY BORN *[subsiding with a sniff]*!!
MARTELLUS *[rising]* Dead in his third year

What a loss to Science!
ARJILLAX Who cares about Science? Serve him right for making that pair of horrors!

THE MALE FIGURE *[glaring]* Ha!
THE FEMALE FIGURE Keep a civil tongue in your head, you

THE NEWLY BORN Oh, do not be so unkind
Arjillax You will make water come out of my eyes again

MARTELLUS [*contemplating the Figures*] Just look at these two devils I modelled them out of the stuff Pygmalion made for them They are masterpieces of art And see what they have done! Does that convince you of the value of art, Arjullan?

STREPHON. They look dangerous. Keep away from them

ECRASIA No need to tell us that, Strephon Pf! They poison the air.

THE MALE FIGURE Beware, woman The wrath of Ozymandias strikes like lightning

THE FEMALE FIGURE You just say that again if you dare, you filthy creature

ACIS What are you going to do with them, Martellus? You are responsible for them, now that Pygmalion has gone

MARTELLUS. If they were marble it would be simple enough I could smash them As it is, how am I to kill them without making a horrible mess?

THE MALE FIGURE [*posing heroically*] Ha! [*He declaims*]

Come one· come all. this rock shall fly
From its firm base as soon as I

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*fondly*] My man! My hero husband! I am proud of you I love you

MARTELLUS. We must send out a message for an ancient

ACIS. Need we bother an ancient about such a trifle? It will take less than half a second to reduce our poor Pygmalion to a pinch of dust Why no calcine the two along with him?

MARTELLUS No: the two automata are trifles; but the use of our powers of destruction is never a trifle I had rather have the case judged

The He-Ancient emerges from the grove The Figures are panic-stricken

THE HE-ANCIENT [*mildly*] Am I wanted? I feel called [*Seeing the body of Pygmalion, and immediately taking a sterner tone*] What! A child lost! A life wasted! How has this happened?

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*frantically*] I didnt do it It was not me. May I be struck dead if I touched him! It was he [*pointing to the Male Figure*]

ALL [*amazed at the lie*] Oh!

THE MALE FIGURE Liar. You bit him Everyone here saw you do it.

THE HE-ANCIENT. Silence [*Going between the Figures*] Who made these two loathsome dolls?

THE MALE FIGURE [*trying to assert himself with his knees knocking*] My name is Ozymandias, king of—

THE HE-ANCIENT [*with a contemptuous gesture*] Pooh!

THE MALE FIGURE [*falling on his knees*] Oh dont, sir Dont. She did it, sir. indeed she did

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*howling lamentably*] Boohoo! oo! ooh!

THE HE-ANCIENT. Silence, I say

He knocks the Male Automaton upright by a very light flip under the chin. The Female Automaton hardly dares to sob. The immortals contemplate them with shame and loathing The She-Ancient comes from the trees opposite the temple

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Somebody wants me What is the matter? [*She comes to the left hand of the Female Figure, not seeing the body of Pygmalion*] Pf! [*Severely*] You have been making dolls. You must not they are not only disgusting. they are dangerous.

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*snivelling piteously*] I'm not a doll, mam. I'm only poor Cleopatra-Semiramis, queen of queens [*Covering her face with her hands*] Oh, dont look at me like that, mam I meant no harm He hurt me indeed he did.

THE HE-ANCIENT The creature has killed that poor youth

THE SHE-ANCIENT [*seeing the body of Pygmalion*] What! This clever child, who promised so well!

THE FEMALE FIGURE He made me. I had as much right to kill him as he had to make me And how was I to know that a little thing like that would kill him? I shouldnt die if he cut off my arm or leg

ECRASIA. What nonsense!

MARTELLUS. It may not be nonsense. I dare say if you cut off her leg she would grow another, like the lobsters and the little lizards

THE HE-ANCIENT Did this dead boy make these two things?

MARTELLUS He made them in his laboratory. I moulded their limbs I am sorry I was thoughtless I did not foresee that they would kill and pretend to be persons they were not, and declare things that were false, and wish evil. I thought they would be merely mechanical fools

THE MALE FIGURE Do you blame us for our human nature?

THE FEMALE FIGURE We are flesh and blood and not angels.

THE MALE FIGURE Have you no hearts?
 ARJILLAX They are mad as well as mischievous May we not destroy them?

STREPHON We abhor them

THE NEWLY BORN We loathe them

ECRASIA They are noisome

ACIS I dont want to be hard on the poor devils; but they are making me feel uneasy in my inside I never had such a sensation before

MARTELLUS. I took a lot of trouble with them But as far as I am concerned, destroy them by all means. I loathed them from the beginning

ALL Yes, yes we all loathe them Let us calcine them

THE FEMALE FIGURE Oh, dont be so cruel I'm not fit to die I will never bite anyone again. I will tell the truth I will do good Is it my fault if I was not made properly? Kill him, but spare me

THE MALE FIGURE No! I have done no harm she has Kill her if you like you have no right to kill me

THE NEWLY BORN Do you hear that? They want to have one another killed.

ARJILLAX Monstrous! Kill them both

THE HE-ANCIENT Silence These things are mere automata they cannot help shrinking from death at any cost You see that they have no self-control, and are merely shuddering through a series of reflexes Let us see whether we cannot put a little more life into them [*He takes the Male Figure by the hand, and places his disengaged hand on its head*] Now listen One of you two is to be destroyed Which of you shall it be?

THE MALE FIGURE [*after a slight convulsion during which his eyes are fixed on the He-Ancient*] Spare her, and kill me

STREPHON Thats better

THE NEWLY BORN Much better

THE SHE-ANCIENT [*handling the Female Automaton in the same manner*] Which of you shall we kill?

THE FEMALE FIGURE. Kill us both How could either of us live without the other?

ECRASIA The woman is more sensible than the man

The Ancients release the Automata

THE MALE FIGURE [*sinking to the ground*] I am discouraged. Life is too heavy a burden

THE FEMALE FIGURE [*collapsing*] I am dying I am glad. I am afraid to live

THE NEWLY BORN I think it would be nice

to give the poor things a little music

ARJILLAX Why?

THE NEWLY BORN I dont know But it would *The Musicians play*

THE FEMALE FIGURE Ozymandias do you hear that? [*She rises on her knees and looks rapidly into space*] Queen of queens! [*She dies*]

THE MALE FIGURE [*crawling feebly towards her until he reaches her hand*] I knew I was really a king of kings [*To the others*] Illusions, farewell we are going to our thrones [*He dies*]

The music stops There is dead silence for a moment

THE NEWLY BORN That was funny

STREPHON It was Even the Ancients are smiling

THE NEWLY BORN Just a little

THE SHE-ANCIENT [*quickly recovering her grave and peremptory manner*] Take these two abominations away to Pygmalion's laboratory, and destroy them with the rest of the laboratory refuse [*Some of them move to obey*] Take care do not touch their flesh it is noxious lift them by their robes Carry Pygmalion into the temple; and dispose of his remains in the usual way

The three bodies are carried out as directed, Pygmalion into the temple by his bare arms and legs, and the two Figures through the grove by their clothes Martellus superintends the removal of the Figures, Acis that of Pygmalion Ecrasia, Arjillax, Strephon, and the Newly Born sit down as before, but on contrary benches, so that Strephon and the Newly Born now face the grove, and Ecrasia and Arjillax the temple The Ancients remain standing at the altar

ECRASIA [*as she sits down*] Oh for a breeze from the hills!

STREPHON Or the wind from the sea at the turn of the tide!

THE NEWLY BORN I want some clean air

THE HE-ANCIENT The air will be clean in a moment This doll flesh that children make decomposes quickly at best, but when it is shaken by such passions as the creatures are capable of, it breaks up at once and becomes horribly tainted.

THE SHE-ANCIENT Let it be a lesson to you all to be content with lifeless toys, and not attempt to make living ones What would you think of us ancients if we made toys of you children?

THE NEWLY BORN [*coaxingly*] Why do you not make toys of us? Then you would play

with us; and that would be very nice

THE SHE-ANCIENT It would not amuse us When you play with one another you play with your bodies, and that makes you supple and strong, but if we played with you we should play with your minds, and perhaps deform them.

STREPHON. You are a ghastly lot, you ancients. I shall kill myself when I am four years old What do you live for?

THE HE-ANCIENT You will find out when you grow up You will not kill yourself.

STREPHON. If you make me believe that, I shall kill myself now.

THE NEWLY BORN. Oh no. I want you I love you.

STREPHON I love someone else And she has gone old, old Lost to me for ever

THE HE-ANCIENT How old?

STREPHON You saw her when you barged into us as we were dancing She is four

THE NEWLY BORN How I should have hated her twenty minutes ago! But I have grown out of that now

THE HE-ANCIENT. Good That hatred is called jealousy, the worst of our childish complaints

Martellus, dusting his hands and puffing, returns from the grove

MARTELLUS. Ouf! [*He sits down next the Newly Born*] That job's finished

ARJILLAX Ancients. I should like to make a few studies of you. Not portraits, of course. I shall idealize you a little I have come to the conclusion that you ancients are the most interesting subjects after all.

MARTELLUS What! Have those two horrors, whose ashes I have just deposited with peculiar pleasure in poor Pygmalion's dust-bin, not cured you of this silly image-making?

ARJILLAX. Why did you model them as young things, you fool? If Pygmalion had come to me, I should have made ancients of them for him Not that I should have modelled them any better I have always said that no one can beat you at your best as far as hand-work is concerned. But this job required brains That is where I should have come in

MARTELLUS. Well, my brany boy, you are welcome to try your hand There are two of Pygmalion's pupils at the laboratory who helped him to manufacture the bones and tissues and all the rest of it. They can turn out a couple of new automata, and you can model them as ancients if this venerable pair

will sit for you.

ECRASIA [*decisively*] No. No more automata They are too disgusting

ACIS [*returning from the temple*] Well, thats done Poor old Pyg!

ECRASIA. Only fancy, Acis! Arjillax wants to make more of those abominable things, and to destroy even their artistic character by making ancients of them

THE NEWLY BORN You wont sit for them, will you? Please dont.

THE HE-ANCIENT Children, listen

ACIS [*striding down the steps to the bench and seating himself next Ecrasia*] What! Even the Ancient wants to make a speech! Give it mouth, O Sage

STREPHON For heaven's sake dont tell us that the earth was once inhabited by Ozymandias and Cleopatras. Life is hard enough for us as it is

THE HE-ANCIENT Life is not meant to be easy, my child, but take courage it can be delightful. What I wanted to tell you is that ever since men existed, children have played with dolls.

ECRASIA You keep using that word. What are dolls, pray?

THE SHE-ANCIENT What you call works of art. Images We call them dolls

ARJILLAX. Just so You have no sense of art; and you instinctively insult it.

THE HE-ANCIENT Children have been known to make dolls out of rags, and to caress them with the deepest fondness.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Eight centuries ago, when I was a child, I made a rag doll. The rag doll is the dearest of all.

THE NEWLY BORN [*eagerly interested*] Oh! Have you got it still?

THE SHE-ANCIENT. I kept it a full week.

ECRASIA Even in your childhood, then, you did not understand high art, and adored your own amateur crudities

THE SHE-ANCIENT How old are you?

ECRASIA. Eight months

THE SHE-ANCIENT. When you have lived as long as I have—

ECRASIA [*interrupting rudely*] I shall worship rag dolls, perhaps Thank heaven, I am still in my prime

THE HE-ANCIENT You are still capable of thanking, though you do not know what you thank. You are a thanking little animal, a blaming little animal, a—

ACIS A gushing little animal.

ARJILLAX And, as she thinks, an artistic little animal

ECRASIA [*nettled*] I am an animated being with a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. If your Automata had been properly animated, Martellus, they would have been more successful

THE SHE-ANCIENT. That is where you are wrong, my child. If those two loathsome things had been rag dolls, they would have been amusing and lovable. The Newly Born here would have played with them, and you would all have laughed and played with them too until you had torn them to pieces, and then you would have laughed more than ever

THE NEWLY BORN. Of course we should. Isn't that funny?

THE HE-ANCIENT. When a thing is funny, search it for a hidden truth

STREPHON. Yes, and take all the fun out of it.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Do not be so embittered because your sweetheart has outgrown her love for you. The Newly Born will make amends

THE NEWLY BORN. Oh yes. I will be more than she could ever have been

STREPHON. Pshaw! Jealous!

THE NEWLY BORN. Oh no. I have grown out of that. I love her now because she loved you, and because you love her

THE HE-ANCIENT. That is the next stage. You are getting on very nicely, my child

MARTELLUS. Come! What is the truth that was hidden in the rag doll?

THE HE-ANCIENT. Well, consider why you are not content with the rag doll, and must have something more closely resembling a real living creature. As you grow up you make images and paint pictures. Those of you who cannot do that make stories about imaginary dolls. Or you dress yourselves up as dolls and act plays about them

THE SHE-ANCIENT. And, to deceive yourself the more completely, you take them so very seriously that Ecrasia here declares that the making of dolls is the holiest work of creation, and the words you put into the mouths of dolls the sacreddest of scriptures and the noblest of utterances

ECRASIA. Tush!

ARJILLAX. Toshi!

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Yet the more beautiful they become the further they retreat from

you. You cannot caress them as you caress the rag doll. You cannot cry for them when they are broken or lost, or when you pretend they have been unkind to you, as you could when you played with rag dolls

THE HE-ANCIENT. At last, like Pygmalion, you demand from your dolls the final perfection of resemblance to life. They must move and speak.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. They must love and hate

THE HE-ANCIENT. They must think that they think

THE SHE-ANCIENT. They must have soft flesh and warm blood

THE HE-ANCIENT. And then, when you have achieved this as Pygmalion did, when the marble masterpiece is dethroned by the automaton and the homo by the homunculus, when the body and the brain, the reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting, as Ecrasia says, stand before you unmasked as mere machinery, and your impulses are shewn to be nothing but reflexes, you are filled with horror and loathing, and would give worlds to be young enough to play with your rag doll again, since every step away from it has been a step away from love and happiness. Is it not true?

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Speak, Martellus. You who have travelled the whole path

MARTELLUS. It is true. With fierce joy I turned a temperature of a million degrees on those two things I had modelled, and saw them vanish in an instant into inoffensive dust.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Speak, Arjillax. You who have advanced from imitating the lightly living child to the intensely living ancient. Is it true, so far?

ARJILLAX. It is partly true. I cannot pretend to be satisfied now with modelling pretty children

THE HE-ANCIENT. And you, Ecrasia. You cling to your highly artistic dolls as the noblest projections of the Life Force, do you not?

ECRASIA. Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable

THE NEWLY BORN [*anticipating the She-Ancient, who is evidently going to challenge her*]. Now you are coming to me, because I am the latest arrival. But I don't understand your art and your dolls at all. I want to caress my darling Strephon, not to play with dolls

ACIS. I am in my fourth year, and I have got on very well without your dolls. I had rather walk up a mountain and down again

than look at all the statues Martellus and Arjillax ever made You prefer a statue to an automaton, and a rag doll to a statue So do I, but I prefer a man to a rag doll. Give me friends, not dolls

THE HE-ANCIENT Yet I have seen you walking over the mountains alone. Have you not found your best friend in yourself?

ACIS What are you driving at, old one? What does all this lead to?

THE HE-ANCIENT. It leads, young man, to the truth that you can create nothing but yourself

ACIS [*musings*] I can create nothing but myself Ecrasia you are clever. Do you understand it? I dont

ECRASIA It is as easy to understand as any other ignorant error. What artist is as great as his own works? He can create masterpieces; but he cannot improve the shape of his own nose

ACIS There! What have you to say to that, old one?

THE HE-ANCIENT. He can alter the shape of his own soul. He could alter the shape of his nose if the difference between a turned-up nose and a turned-down one were worth the effort One does not face the throes of creation for trifles

ACIS What have you to say to that, Ecrasia?

ECRASIA I say that if the ancients had thoroughly grasped the theory of fine art they would understand that the difference between a beautiful nose and an ugly one is of supreme importance that it is indeed the only thing that matters.

THE SHE-ANCIENT That is, they would understand something they could not believe, and that you do not believe

ACIS. Just so, mam Art is not honest that is why I never could stand much of it It is all make-believe Ecrasia never really says things she only rattles her teeth in her mouth.

ECRASIA Acis: you are rude

ACIS You mean that I wont play the game of make-believe. Well, I dont ask you to play it with me; so why should you expect me to play it with you?

ECRASIA. You have no right to say that I am not sincere. I have found a happiness in art that real life has never given me. I am intensely in earnest about art There is a magic and mystery in art that you know nothing of.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Yes, child art is the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures You use a glass mirror to see your face. you use works of art to see your soul But we who are older use neither glass mirrors nor works of art. We have a direct sense of life. When you gain that you will put aside your mirrors and statues, your toys and your dolls.

THE HE-ANCIENT Yet we too have our toys and our dolls That is the trouble of the ancients

ARJILLAX. What! The ancients have their troubles! It is the first time I ever heard one of them confess it.

THE HE-ANCIENT. Look at us Look at me. This is my body, my blood, my brain; but it is not me I am the eternal life, the perpetual resurrection; but [*striking his body*] this structure, this organism, this makeshift, can be made by a boy in a laboratory, and is held back from dissolution only by my use of it. Worse still, it can be broken by a slip of the foot, drowned by a cramp in the stomach, destroyed by a flash from the clouds. Sooner or later, its destruction is certain.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Yes, this body is the last doll to be discarded When I was a child, Ecrasia, I, too, was an artist, like your sculptor friends there, striving to create perfection in things outside myself. I made statues: I painted pictures: I tried to worship them

THE HE-ANCIENT. I had no such skill; but I, like Acis, sought perfection in friends, in lovers, in nature, in things outside myself Alas! I could not create it. I could only imagine it.

THE SEA-ANCIENT I, like Arjillax, found out that my statues of bodily beauty were no longer even beautiful to me, and I pressed on and made statues and pictures of men and women of genius, like those in the old fable of Michael Angelo Like Martellus, I smashed them when I saw that there was no life in them. that they were so dead that they would not even dissolve as a dead body does.

THE HE-ANCIENT. And I, like Acis, ceased to walk over the mountains with my friends, and walked alone, for I found that I had creative power over myself but none over my friends And then I ceased to walk on the mountains; for I saw that the mountains were dead.

ACIS [*protesting vehemently*] No I grant you about the friends perhaps, but the mountains

are still the mountains, each with its name, its individuality, its upstanding strength and majesty, its beauty—

ECRASIA. What! Acis among the rhapsodists!

THE HE-ANCIENT Mere metaphor, my poor boy the mountains are corpses

ALL THE YOUNG [*repelled*] Oh!

THE HE-ANCIENT Yes In the hardpressed heart of the earth, where the inconceivable heat of the sun still glows, the stone lives in fierce atomic convulsion, as we live in our slower way When it is cast out to the surface it dies like a deep-sea fish what you see is only its cold dead body We have tapped that central heat as prehistoric man tapped water springs, but nothing has come up alive from those flaming depths your landscapes, your mountains, are only the world's cast skins and decaying teeth on which we live like microbes

ECRASIA Ancient you blaspheme against Nature and against Man

THE SHE-ANCIENT Child, child, how much enthusiasm will you have for man when you have endured eight centuries of him, as I have, and seen him perish by an empty mischance that is yet a certainty? When I discarded my dolls as he discarded his friends and his mountains, it was to myself I turned as to the final reality Here, and here alone, I could shape and create When my arm was weak and I willed it to be strong, I could create a roll of muscle on it, and when I understood that, I understood that I could without any greater miracle give myself ten arms and three heads

THE HE-ANCIENT I also came to understand such miracles For fifty years I sat contemplating this power in myself and concentrating my will.

THE SHE-ANCIENT So did I, and for five more years I made myself into all sorts of fantastic monsters I walked upon a dozen legs I worked with twenty hands and a hundred fingers. I looked to the four quarters of the compass with eight eyes out of four heads Children fled in amazement from me until I had to hide myself from them, and the ancients, who had forgotten how to laugh, smiled grimly when they passed

THE HE-ANCIENT We have all committed these follies You will all commit them

THE NEWLY BORN Oh, do grow a lot of arms and legs and heads for us It would be so funny

THE HE-ANCIENT My child I am just as

well as I am I would not lift my finger now to have a thousand heads

THE SHE-ANCIENT. But what would I not give to have no head at all?

ALL THE YOUNG Whats that? No head at all? Why? How?

THE HE-ANCIENT Can you not understand?

ALL THE YOUNG [*shaking their heads*] No

THE SHE-ANCIENT. One day, when I was tired of learning to walk forward with some of my feet and backwards with others and sideways with the rest all at once, I sat on a rock with my four chins resting on four of my palms, and four of my elbows resting on four of my knees And suddenly it came into my mind that this monstrous machinery of heads and limbs was no more me than my statues had been me, and that it was only an automaton that I had enslaved

MARTELLUS Enslaved? What does that mean?

THE SHE-ANCIENT A thing that must do what you command it is a slave, and its commander is its master These are words you will learn when your turn comes

THE HE-ANCIENT You will also learn that when the master has come to do everything through the slave, the slave becomes his master, since he cannot live without him

THE SHE-ANCIENT And so I perceived that I had made myself the slave of a slave

THE HE-ANCIENT When we discovered that, we shed our superfluous heads and legs and arms until we had our old shapes again, and no longer startled the children

THE SHE-ANCIENT But still I am the slave of this slave, my body How am I to be delivered from it?

THE HE-ANCIENT That, children, is the trouble of the ancients For whilst we are tied to this tyrannous body we are subject to its death, and our destiny is not achieved.

THE NEWLY BORN What is your destiny?

THE HE-ANCIENT To be immortal

THE SHE-ANCIENT The day will come when there will be no people, only thought

THE HE-ANCIENT And that will be life eternal

ECRASIA. I trust I shall meet my fatal accident before that day dawns

ARJILLAX For once, Ecrasia, I agree with you A world in which there were nothing plastic would be an utterly miserable one

ECRASIA No limbs, no contours, no exquisite lines and elegant shapes, no worship of beautiful bodies, no poetic embraces in which cultivated lovers pretend that their

caressing hands are wandering over celestial hills and enchanted valleys, no—

ACIS [*interrupting her disgustedly*] What an inhuman mind you have, Ecrasia!

ECRASIA. Inhuman!

ACIS Yes, inhuman. Why don't you fall in love with someone?

ECRASIA. I! I have been in love all my life I burned with it even in the egg

ACIS Not a bit of it. You and Arjillax are just as hard as two stones

ECRASIA. You did not always think so, Acis

ACIS Oh, I know I offered you my love once, and asked for yours

ECRASIA And did I deny it to you, Acis?

ACIS You didn't even know what love was

ECRASIA Oh! I adored you, you stupid oaf, until I found that you were a mere animal

ACIS And I made no end of a fool of myself about you until I discovered that you were a mere artist You appreciated my contours! I was plastic, as Arjillax says I wasn't a man to you I was a masterpiece appealing to your tastes and your senses Your tastes and senses had overlaid the direct impulse of life in you And because I cared only for our life, and went straight to it, and was bored by your calling my limbs fancy names and mapping me into mountains and valleys and all the rest of it, you called me an animal Well, I am an animal, if you call a live man an animal

ECRASIA. You need not explain You refused to be refined I did my best to lift your prehistoric impulses on to the plane of beauty, of imagination, of romance, of poetry, of art, of—

ACIS These things are all very well in their way and in their proper places But they are not love. They are an unnatural adulteration of love Love is a simple thing and a deep thing it is an act of life and not an illusion Art is an illusion

ARJILLAX That is false The statue comes to life always The statues of today are the men and women of the next incubation I hold up the marble figure before the mother and say, "This is the model you must copy" We produce what we see Let no man dare to create in art a thing that he would not have exist in life

MARTELLUS. Yes I have been through all that But you yourself are making statues of ancients instead of beautiful nymphs and swains And Ecrasia is right about the an-

cients being martistic They are damnably inartistic.

ECRASIA [*triumphant*] Ah! Our greatest artist vindicates me Thanks, Martellus

MARTELLUS The body always ends by being a bore Nothing remains beautiful and interesting except thought, because the thought is the life Which is just what this old gentleman and this old lady seem to think too.

THE SHE-ANCIENT. Quite so.

THE HE-ANCIENT. Precisely.

THE NEWLY BORN [*to the He-Ancient*] But you can't be nothing. What do you want to be?

THE HE-ANCIENT A vortex

THE NEWLY BORN. A what?

THE SHE-ANCIENT. A vortex I began as a vortex why should I not end as one?

ECRASIA Oh! That is what you old people are Vorticists

ACIS. But if life is thought, can you live without a head?

THE HE-ANCIENT Not now perhaps But prehistoric men thought they could not live without tails I can live without a tail. Why should I not live without a head?

THE NEWLY BORN. What is a tail?

THE HE-ANCIENT. A habit of which your ancestors managed to cure themselves

THE SHE-ANCIENT. None of us now believe that all this machinery of flesh and blood is necessary It dies

THE HE-ANCIENT. It imprisons us on this petty planet and forbids us to range through the stars.

ACIS But even a vortex is a vortex in something. You can't have a whirlpool without water, and you can't have a vortex without gas, or molecules or atoms or ions or electrons or something, not nothing

THE HE-ANCIENT No, the vortex is not the water nor the gas nor the atoms. it is a power over these things

THE SHE-ANCIENT. The body was the slave of the vortex; but the slave has become the master; and we must free ourselves from that tyranny It is this stuff [*indicating her body*], this flesh and blood and bone and all the rest of it, that is intolerable. Even prehistoric man dreamed of what he called an astral body, and asked who would deliver him from the body of this death

ACIS [*evidently out of his depth*] I shouldn't think too much about it if I were you You have to keep sane, you know.

The two Ancients look at one another, shrug their shoulders, and address themselves to their departure

THE HE-ANCIENT We are staying too long with you, children We must go

All the young people rise rather eagerly

ARJILLAX Dont mention it

THE SHE-ANCIENT It is tiresome for us, too You see, children, we have to put things very crudely to you to make ourselves intelligible

THE HE-ANCIENT And I am afraid we do not quite succeed

STREPHON. Very kind of you to come at all and talk to us, I'm sure

ECRASIA Why do the other ancients never come and give us a turn?

THE SHE-ANCIENT It is so difficult for them They have forgotten how to speak, how to read, even how to think in your fashion We do not communicate with one another in that way or apprehend the world as you do

THE HE-ANCIENT I find it more and more difficult to keep up your language Another century or two and it will be impossible I shall have to be relieved by a younger shepherd

ACIS Of course we are always delighted to see you, but still, if it tries you very severely, we could manage pretty well by ourselves, you know

THE SHE-ANCIENT Tell me, Acis do you ever think of yourself as having to live perhaps for thousands of years?

ACIS Oh, dont talk about it Why, I know very well that I have only four years of what any reasonable person would call living, and three and a half of them are already gone

ECRASIA You must not mind our saying so, but really you cannot call being an ancient living

THE NEWLY BORN [*almost in tears*] Oh, this dreadful shortness of our lives! I cannot bear it

STREPHON I made up my mind on that subject long ago When I am three years and fifty weeks old, I shall have my fatal accident And it will not be an accident.

THE HE-ANCIENT We are very tired of this subject. I must leave you

THE NEWLY BORN What is being tired?

THE SHE-ANCIENT The penalty of attending to children Farewell

The two Ancients go away severally, she into the grove, he up to the hills behind the temple

ALL. Ouf! [*A great sigh of relief*]

ECRASIA Dreadful people!

STREPHON Bores!

MARTELLUS Yet one would like to follow them, to enter into their life, to grasp their thought, to comprehend the universe as they must

ARJILLAX Getting old, Martellus?

MARTELLUS Well, I have finished with the dolls, and I am no longer jealous of you That looks like the end Two hours sleep is enough for me I am afraid I am beginning to find you all rather silly

STREPHON I know My girl went off this morning She hadnt slept for weeks And she found mathematics more interesting than me

MARTELLUS There is a prehistoric saying that has come down to us from a famous woman teacher She said "Leave women, and study mathematics" It is the only remaining fragment of a lost scripture called The Confessions of St Augustin, the English Opium Eater That primitive savage must have been a great woman, to say a thing that still lives after three hundred centuries I too will leave women and study mathematics, which I have neglected too long Farewell, children, my old playmates I almost wish I could feel sentimental about parting from you; but the cold truth is that you bore me Do not be angry with me your turn will come [*He passes away gravely into the grove*]

ARJILLAX. There goes a great spirit What a sculptor he was! And now, nothing! It is as if he had cut off his hands

THE NEWLY BORN Oh, will you all leave me as he has left you?

ECRASIA Never We have sworn it

STREPHON What is the use of swearing? She swore He swore You have sworn They have sworn

ECRASIA You speak like a grammar

STREPHON That is how one ought to speak, isnt it? We shall all be forsworn

THE NEWLY BORN Do not talk like that You are saddening us, and you are chasing the light away It is growing dark

ACIS Night is falling The light will come back tomorrow

THE NEWLY BORN What is tomorrow?

ACIS The day that never comes [*He turns towards the temple*]

All begin trooping into the temple

THE NEWLY BORN [*holding Acis back*] That is no answer What—

ARJILLAX Silence Little children should be seen and not heard

THE NEWLY BORN [*putting out her tongue at him*]

ECRASIA Ungraceful You must not do that.

THE NEWLY BORN I will do what I like But there is something the matter with me I want to lie down I cannot keep my eyes open

ECRASIA You are falling asleep You will wake up again

THE NEWLY BORN [*drowsily*] What is sleep?

ACIS Ask no questions, and you will be told no lies. [*He takes her by the ear, and leads her firmly towards the temple*]

THE NEWLY BORN. Ah! oh! ah! Dont I want to be carried [*She reels into the arms of Acis, who carries her into the temple*]

ECRASIA Come, Arjillax you at least are still an artist I adore you

ARJILLAX. Do you? Unfortunately for you, I am not still a child I have grown out of cuddling I can only appreciate your figure Does that satisfy you?

ECRASIA At what distance?

ARJILLAX. Arm's length or more

ECRASIA Thank you not for me [*She turns away from him*]

ARJILLAX Ha! Ha! [*He strides off into the temple*]

ECRASIA [*calling to Strephon, who is on the threshold of the temple, going in*] Strephon

STREPHON. No My heart is broken [*He goes into the temple*]

ECRASIA Must I pass the night alone? [*She looks round, seeking another partner, but they have all gone*] After all, I can imagine a lover nobler than any of you [*She goes into the temple*]

It is now quite dark. A vague radiance appears near the temple and shapes itself into the ghost of Adam

A WOMAN'S VOICE [*in the grove*] Who is that?

ADAM The ghost of Adam, the first father of mankind Who are you?

THE VOICE. The ghost of Eve, the first mother of mankind.

ADAM. Come forth, wife, and shew yourself to me

EVE [*appearing near the grove*] Here I am, husband. You are very old

A VOICE [*in the hells*] Ha! ha! ha!

ADAM Who laughs? Who dares laugh at

Adam?

EVE Who has the heart to laugh at Eve?

THE VOICE The ghost of Cain, the first child, and the first murderer [*He appears between them, and as he does so there is a prolonged hiss*] Who dares hiss at Cain, the lord of death?

A VOICE The ghost of the serpent, that lived before Adam and before Eve, and taught them how to bring forth Cain [*She becomes visible, coiled in the trees*].

A VOICE There is one that came before the serpent

THE SERPENT. That is the voice of Lilith, in whom the father and mother were one Hail, Lilith!

Lilith becomes visible between Cain and Adam

LILITH I suffered unspeakably; I tore myself asunder, I lost my life, to make of my one flesh these twain, man and woman And this is what has come of it What do you make of it, Adam, my son?

ADAM I made the earth bring forth by my labor, and the woman bring forth by my love. And this is what has come of it What do you make of it, Eve, my wife?

EVE I nourished the egg in my body and fed it with my blood And now they let it fall as the birds did, and suffer not at all What do you make of it, Cain, my first-born?

CAIN. I invented killing and conquest and mastery and the winnowing out of the weak by the strong And now the strong have slain one another, and the weak live for ever, and their deeds do nothing for the doer more than for another What do you make of it, snake?

THE SERPENT I am justified. For I chose wisdom and the knowledge of good and evil; and now there is no evil; and wisdom and good are one It is enough. [*She vanishes*]

CAIN There is no place for me on earth any longer You cannot deny that mine was a splendid game while it lasted But now! Out, out, brief candle! [*He vanishes*]

EVE. The clever ones were always my favorites The diggers and the fighters have dug themselves in with the worms My clever ones have inherited the earth All's well [*She fades away*]

ADAM I can make nothing of it, neither head nor tail What is it all for? Why?

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

Whither? Whence? We were well enough in the garden And now the fools have killed all the animals, and they are dissatisfied because they cannot be bothered with their bodies! Foolishness, I call it [*He disappears*]

LILITH They have accepted the burden of eternal life They have taken the agony from birth, and their life does not fail them even in the hour of their destruction Their breasts are without milk their bowels are gone the very shapes of them are only ornaments for their children to admire and caress without understanding Is this enough, or shall I labor again? Shall I bring forth something that will sweep them away and make an end of them as they have swept away the beasts of the garden, and made an end of the crawling things and the flying things and of all them that refuse to live for ever? I had patience with them for many ages they tried me very sorely They did terrible things they embraced death, and said that eternal life was a fable I stood amazed at the malice and destructiveness of the things I had made Mars blushed as he looked down on the shame of his sister planet cruelty and hypocrisy became so hideous that the face of the earth was pitted with the graves of little children among which living skeletons crawled in search of horrible food The pangs of another birth were already upon me when one man repented and lived three hundred years, and I waited to see what would come of that And so much came of it that the horrors of that time seem now but an evil dream They have redeemed themselves from their villainess, and turned away from their sins Best of all, they are still not satisfied the impulse I gave them in that day when I sundered myself in twain and launched Man and Woman on the earth still urges them after passing a million goals they press on to the goal of redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence that, when the world

began, was a whirlpool in pure force And though all that they have done seems but the first hour of the infinite work of creation, yet I will not supersede them until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it I can wait waiting and patience mean nothing to the eternal I gave the woman the greatest of gifts curiosity By that her seed has been saved from my wrath, for I also am curious, and I have waited always to see what they will do tomorrow Let them feed that appetite well for me I say, let them dread, of all things, stagnation, for from the moment I, Lilith, lose hope and faith in them, they are doomed. In that hope and faith I have let them live for a moment, and in that moment I have spared them many times But mightier creatures than they have killed hope and faith, and perished from the earth, and I may not spare them for ever I am Lilith I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul But in enslaving Life's enemy I made him Life's master, for that is the end of all slavery, and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no matter. And because these infants that call themselves ancients are reaching out towards that, I will have patience with them still, though I know well that when they attain it they shall become one with me and supersede me; and Lilith will be only a legend and a lay that has lost its meaning Of Life only is there no end, and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short It is enough that there is a beyond. [*She vanishes*]

THE END

XXXI

SAINT JOAN

A CHRONICLE PLAY IN SIX SCENES, AND AN EPILOGUE

SCENE I

A fine spring morning on the river Meuse, between Lorraine and Champagne, in the year 1429 A D, in the castle of Vaucouleurs

Captain Robert de Baudricourt, a military squire, handsome and physically energetic, but with no will of his own, is disguising that defect in his usual fashion by storming terribly at his steward, a trodden worm, scanty of flesh, scanty of hair, who might be any age from 18 to 55, being the sort of man whom age cannot wither because he has never bloomed

The two are in a sunny stone chamber on the first floor of the castle At a plain strong oak table, seated in chair to match, the captain presents his left profile The steward stands facing him at the other side of the table, if so deprecatory a stance as his can be called standing The mulioned thirteenth-century window is open behind him Near it in the corner is a turret with a narrow arched doorway leading to a winding stair which descends to the courtyard There is a stout fourlegged stool under the table, and a wooden chest under the window

ROBERT. No eggs! No eggs!! Thousand thunders, man, what do you mean by no eggs?

STEWARD Sir. it is not my fault It is the act of God.

ROBERT Blasphemy You tell me there are no eggs, and you blame your Maker for it

STEWARD Sir what can I do? I cannot lay eggs

ROBERT [*sarcastic*] Ha! You jest about it

STEWARD No, sir, God knows We all have to go without eggs just as you have, sir. The hens will not lay.

ROBERT Indeed! [*Rising*] Now listen to me, you

STEWARD [*humbly*] Yes, sir.

ROBERT What am I?

STEWARD What are you, sir?

ROBERT [*coming at him*] Yes—what am I? Am I Robert, squire of Baudricourt and captain of this castle of Vaucouleurs, or am I a cowboy?

STEWARD Oh, sir, you know you are a greater man here than the king himself.

ROBERT Precisely And now, do you know what you are?

STEWARD I am nobody, sir, except that I have the honor to be your steward

ROBERT [*driving him to the wall, adjective by adjective*] You have not only the honor of being my steward, but the privilege of being the worst, most incompetent, drivelling snivelling jibbering jabbering idiot of a steward in France. [*He strides back to the table*]

STEWARD [*covering on the chest*] Yes, sir to a great man like you I must seem like that.

ROBERT [*turning*] My fault, I suppose. Eh?

STEWARD [*coming to him deprecatingly*] Oh, sir you always give my most innocent words such a turn!

ROBERT I will give your neck a turn if you dare tell me, when I ask you how many eggs there are, that you cannot lay any

STEWARD [*protesting*] Oh sir, oh sir—

ROBERT No not oh sir, oh sir, but no sir, no sir My three Barbary hens and the black are the best layers in Champagne. And you come and tell me that there are no eggs! Who stole them? Tell me that, before I kick you out through the castle gate for a liar and a seller of my goods to thieves The milk was short yesterday, too do not forget that

STEWARD [*desperate*] I know, sir. I know only too well There is no milk there are no eggs tomorrow there will be nothing

ROBERT. Nothing! You will steal the lot eh?

STEWARD No, sir. nobody will steal anything But there is a spell on us we are bewitched

ROBERT That story is not good enough for me Robert de Baudricourt burns witches and hangs thieves Go Bring me four dozen eggs and two gallons of milk here in this room before noon, or Heaven have mercy on your bones! I will teach you to make a fool of me. [*He resumes his seat with an air of finality*]

STEWARD Sir. I tell you there are no eggs There will be none—not if you were to kill me for it—as long as The Maid is at the door.

ROBERT The Maid! What maid? What are you talking about?

STEWARD The girl from Lorraine, sir From Domrémy

ROBERT [*rising in fearful wrath*] Thirty thousand thunders! Fifty thousand devils! Do you mean to say that that girl, who had the impudence to ask to see me two days ago, and whom I told you to send back to her father with my orders that he was to give her a good hiding, is here still?

STEWARD I have told her to go, sir She wont

ROBERT I did not tell you to tell her to go I told you to throw her out You have fifty men-at-arms and a dozen lumps of ablebodied servants to carry out my orders Are they afraid of her?

STEWARD She is so positive, sir

ROBERT [*seizing him by the scruff of the neck*] Positive! Now see here I am going to throw you downstairs

STEWARD No, sir Please

ROBERT Well, stop me by being positive It's quite easy any slut of a girl can do it

STEWARD [*hanging limp in his hands*] Sir, sir you cannot get rid of her by throwing me out [*Robert has to let him drop He squats on his knees on the floor, contemplating his master resignedly*] You see, sir, you are much more positive than I am But so is she

ROBERT I am stronger than you are, you fool.

STEWARD No sir, it isnt that it's your strong character, sir She is weaker than we are she is only a slip of a girl, but we cannot make her go

ROBERT You parcel of curs you are afraid of her

STEWARD [*rising cautiously*] No, sir we are afraid of you, but she puts courage into us She really doesnt seem to be afraid of anything Perhaps you could frighten her, sir

ROBERT [*grimly*] Perhaps Where is she now?

STEWARD Down in the courtyard, sir, talking to the soldiers as usual She is always talking to the soldiers except when she is praying

ROBERT Praying! Ha! You believe she prays, you idiot I know the sort of girl that is always talking to soldiers She shall talk to me a bit [*He goes to the window and shouts fiercely through it*] Hallo, you there!

A GIRL'S VOICE [*bright, strong, and rough*] Is

it me, sir?

ROBERT Yes, you

THE VOICE Be you captain?

ROBERT Yes, damn your impudence, I be captain Come up here [*To the soldiers in the yard*] Shew her the way, you And shove her along quick. [*He leaves the window, and returns to his place at the table, where he sits magisterially*]

STEWARD [*whispering*] She wants to go and be a soldier herself She wants you to give her soldier's clothes Armor, sir! And a sword! Actually! [*He steals behind Robert*]

Joan appears in the turret doorway She is an ablebodied country girl of 17 or 18, respectfully dressed in red, with an uncommon face eyes very wide apart and bulging as they often do in very imaginative people, a long well-shaped nose with wide nostrils, a short upper lip, resolute but full-lipped mouth, and handsome fighting chin She comes eagerly to the table, delighted at having penetrated to Baudricourt's presence at last, and full of hope as to the result His scowl does not check or frighten her in the least Her voice is normally a hearty coaxing voice, very confident, very appealing, very hard to resist

JOAN [*bobbing a curtsey*] Good morning, captain squire Captain you are to give me a horse and armor and some soldiers, and send me to the Dauphin Those are your orders from my Lord

ROBERT [*outraged*] Orders from your lord! And who the devil may your lord be? Go back to him, and tell him that I am neither duke nor peer at his orders I am squire of Baudricourt, and I take no orders except from the king

JOAN [*reassuringly*] Yes, squire that is all right My Lord is the King of Heaven

ROBERT Why, the girl's mad [*To the steward*] Why didnt you tell me so, you blockhead?

STEWARD Sir do not anger her give her what she wants

JOAN [*impatient, but friendly*] They all say I am mad until I talk to them, squire But you see that it is the will of God that you are to do what He has put into my mind

ROBERT It is the will of God that I shall send you back to your father with orders to put you under lock and key and thrash the madness out of you What have you to say to that?

JOAN You think you will, squire, but you will find it all coming quite different You

said you would not see me, but here I am

STEWARD [*appealing*] Yes, sir You see, sir

ROBERT Hold your tongue, you

STEWARD [*abjectly*] Yes, sir

ROBERT [*to Joan, with a sour loss of confidence*] So you are presuming on my seeing you, are you?

JOAN [*sweetly*] Yes, squire

ROBERT [*feeling that he has lost ground, brings down his two fists squarely on the table, and inflates his chest imposingly to cure the unwelcome and only too familiar sensation*] Now listen to me I am going to assert myself

JOAN [*busily*] Please do, squire The horse will cost sixteen francs It is a good deal of money, but I can save it on the armor I can find a soldier's armor that will fit me well enough I am very hardy, and I do not need beautiful armor made to my measure like you wear I shall not want many soldiers the Dauphin will give me all I need to raise the siege of Orleans

ROBERT [*flabbergasted*] To raise the siege of Orleans!

JOAN [*simply*] Yes, squire that is what God is sending me to do Three men will be enough for you to send with me if they are good men and gentle to me They have promised to come with me Polly and Jack and—

ROBERT Polly! You impudent baggage, do you dare call squire Bertrand de Poulenguey Polly to my face?

JOAN. His friends call him so, squire I did not know he had any other name Jack—

ROBERT That is Monsieur John of Metz, I suppose?

JOAN. Yes, squire. Jack will come willingly he is a very kind gentleman, and gives me money to give to the poor I think John Godsave will come, and Dick the Archer, and their servants John of Honecourt and Julian There will be no trouble for you, squire I have arranged it all you have only to give the order

ROBERT [*contemplating her in a stupor of amazement*] Well, I am damned!

JOAN [*with unruffled sweetness*] No, squire God is very merciful; and the blessed saints Catherine and Margaret, who speak to me every day [*he gapes*], will intercede for you You will go to paradise, and your name will be remembered for ever as my first helper

ROBERT [*to the steward, still much bothered, but changing his tone as he pursues a new clue*] Is this true about Monsieur de Poulenguey?

STEWARD [*eagerly*] Yes, sir, and about Monsieur de Metz too They both want to go with her

ROBERT [*thoughtful*] Mf! [*He goes to the window, and shouts into the courtyard*] Hallo! You there send Monsieur de Poulenguey to me, will you? [*He turns to Joan*] Get out; and wait in the yard

JOAN [*smiling brightly at him*] Right, squire [*She goes out*]

ROBERT [*to the steward*] Go with her, you, you dithering imbecile Stay within call; and keep your eye on her I shall have her up here again

STEWARD Do so in God's name, sir Think of those hens, the best layers in Champagne, and—

ROBERT Think of my boot, and take your backside out of reach of it

The steward retreats hastily and finds himself confronted in the doorway by Bertrand de Poulenguey, a lymphatic French gentleman-at-arms, aged 36 or thereabout, employed in the department of the provost-marshal, dreamily absent-minded, seldom speaking unless spoken to, and then slow and obstinate in reply altogether in contrast to the self-assertive, loud-mouthed, superficially energetic, fundamentally null-less Robert The steward makes way for him, and vanishes

Poulenguey salutes, and stands awaiting orders

ROBERT [*genially*] It isn't service, Polly A friendly talk. Sit down [*He hooks the stool from under the table with his instep*]

Poulenguey, relaxing, comes into the room, places the stool between the table and the window; and sits down ruminatively. Robert, half sitting on the end of the table, begins the friendly talk.

ROBERT Now listen to me, Polly I must talk to you like a father.

Poulenguey looks up at him gravely for a moment, but says nothing

ROBERT It's about this girl you are interested in Now, I have seen her I have talked to her First, she's mad That doesn't matter Second, she's not a farm wench She's a bourgeoisie That matters a good deal. I know her class exactly Her father came here last year to represent his village in a lawsuit he is one of their notables A farmer. Not a gentleman farmer he makes money by it, and lives by it. Still, not a laborer. Not a mechanic. He might have a cousin a lawyer, or in the Church. People of this sort may be of no account socially; but they can give a lot of bother to the authorities That is to

say, to me Now no doubt it seems to you a very simple thing to take this girl away, humbugging her into the belief that you are taking her to the Dauphin But if you get her into trouble, you may get me into no end of a mess, as I am her father's lord, and responsible for her protection So friends or no friends, Polly, hands off her

POULENGEY [*with deliberate impressiveness*] I should as soon think of the blessed Virgin herself in that way, as of this girl

ROBERT [*coming off the table*] But she says you and Jack and Dick have offered to go with her What for? You are not going to tell me that you take her crazy notion of going to the Dauphin seriously, are you?

POULENGEY [*slowly*] There is something about her They are pretty foulmouthed and foulminded down there in the guardroom, some of them But there hasn't been a word that has anything to do with her being a woman They have stopped swearing before her There is something Something It may be worth trying

ROBERT Oh, come, Polly! pull yourself together Commonsense was never your strong point, but this is a little too much [*He retreats disgustedly*]

POULENGEY [*unmoved*] What is the good of commonsense? If we had any commonsense we should join the Duke of Burgundy and the English king They hold half the country, right down to the Loire They have Paris They have this castle you know very well that we had to surrender it to the Duke of Bedford, and that you are only holding it on parole The Dauphin is in Chinon, like a rat in a corner, except that he won't fight We don't even know that he is the Dauphin his mother says he isn't, and she ought to know Think of that! the queen denying the legitimacy of her own son!

ROBERT Well, she married her daughter to the English king Can you blame the woman?

POULENGEY I blame nobody But thanks to her, the Dauphin is down and out, and we may as well face it The English will take Orleans the Bastard will not be able to stop them

ROBERT He beat the English the year before last at Montargis I was with him

POULENGEY No matter his men are cowed now, and he can't work miracles And I tell you that nothing can save our side now but a miracle

ROBERT Miracles are all right, Polly The only difficulty about them is that they don't happen nowadays

POULENGEY I used to think so I am not so sure now [*Rising, and moving ruminatively towards the window*] At all events this is not a time to leave any stone unturned There is something about the girl

ROBERT Oh! You think the girl can work miracles, do you?

POULENGEY I think the girl herself is a bit of a miracle Anyhow, she is the last card left in our hand Better play her than throw up the game [*He wanders to the turret*]

ROBERT [*wavering*] You really think that?

POULENGEY [*turning*] Is there anything else left for us to think?

ROBERT [*going to him*] Look here, Polly If you were in my place would you let a girl like that do you out of sixteen francs for a horse?

POULENGEY I will pay for the horse

ROBERT You will!

POULENGEY Yes I will back my opinion

ROBERT You will really gamble on a forlorn hope to the tune of sixteen francs?

POULENGEY It is not a gamble

ROBERT What else is it?

POULENGEY It is a certainty Her words and her ardent faith in God have put fire into me

ROBERT [*giving him up*] Whew! You are as mad as she is

POULENGEY [*obstinately*] We want a few mad people now See where the sane ones have landed us!

ROBERT [*his irresoluteness now openly swamping his affected decisiveness*] I shall feel like a precious fool Still, if you feel sure—?

POULENGEY I feel sure enough to take her to Chinon—unless you stop me

ROBERT This is not fair You are putting the responsibility on me

POULENGEY It is on you whichever way you decide

ROBERT Yes that's just it. Which way am I to decide? You don't see how awkward this is for me [*Snatching at a dilatory step with an unconscious hope that Joan will make up his mind for him*] Do you think I ought to have another talk to her?

POULENGEY [*rising*] Yes [*He goes to the window and calls*] Joan!

JOAN'S VOICE Will he let us go, Polly?

POULENGEY Come up Come in [*Turning to*

Robert] Shall I leave you with her?

ROBERT No. stay here; and back me up.

Poulengey sits down on the chest Robert goes back to his magisterial chair, but remains standing to inflate himself more imposingly. Joan comes in, full of good news.

JOAN Jack will go halves for the horse

ROBERT Well! [*He sits, deflated*]

POULENGEY [*gravely*] Sit down, Joan

JOAN [*checked a little, and looking to Robert*] May I?

ROBERT Do what you are told

Joan curtsies and sits down on the stool between them Robert outfaces his perplexity with his most peremptory air

ROBERT What is your name?

JOAN [*chattily*] They always call me Jenny in Lorraine Here in France I am Joan The soldiers call me The Maid

ROBERT. What is your surname?

JOAN. Surname? What is that? My father sometimes calls himself d'Arc, but I know nothing about it. You met my father He—

ROBERT. Yes, yes. I remember You come from Domrémy in Lorraine, I think.

JOAN Yes, but what does it matter? we all speak French

ROBERT. Dont ask questions answer them. How old are you?

JOAN Seventeen. so they tell me It might be nineteen. I dont remember

ROBERT What did you mean when you said that St Catherine and St Margaret talked to you every day?

JOAN They do.

ROBERT What are they like?

JOAN [*suddenly obstinate*] I will tell you nothing about that they have not given me leave.

ROBERT But you actually see them, and they talk to you just as I am talking to you?

JOAN. No: it is quite different I cannot tell you you must not talk to me about my voices

ROBERT. How do you mean? voices?

JOAN. I hear voices telling me what to do They come from God

ROBERT They come from your imagination.

JOAN. Of course That is how the messages of God come to us

POULENGEY. Checkmate

ROBERT No fear! [*To Joan*] So God says you are to raise the siege of Orleans?

JOAN And to crown the Dauphin in Rheims Cathedral.

ROBERT [*gasping*] Crown the D——! Gosh! JOAN. And to make the English leave France.

ROBERT [*sarcastic*] Anything else?

JOAN [*charming*] Not just at present, thank you, squire

ROBERT I suppose you think raising a siege is as easy as chasing a cow out of a meadow You think soldiering is anybody's job?

JOAN I do not think it can be very difficult if God is on your side, and you are willing to put your life in His hand But many soldiers are very simple

ROBERT [*grimly*] Simple! Did you ever see English soldiers fighting?

JOAN They are only men God made them just like us; but He gave them their own country and their own language; and it is not His will that they should come into our country and try to speak our language

ROBERT Who has been putting such nonsense into your head? Dont you know that soldiers are subject to their feudal lord, and that it is nothing to them or to you whether he is the duke of Burgundy or the king of England or the king of France? What has their language to do with it?

JOAN I do not understand that a bit We are all subject to the King of Heaven; and He gave us our countries and our languages, and meant us to keep to them If it were not so it would be murder to kill an Englishman in battle; and you, squire, would be in great danger of hell fire You must not think about your duty to your feudal lord, but about your duty to God

POULENGEY It's no use, Robert she can choke you like that every time.

ROBERT. Can she, by Saint Dennis! We shall see [*To Joan*] We are not talking about God. we are talking about practical affairs I ask you again, girl, have you ever seen English soldiers fighting? Have you ever seen them plundering, burning, turning the countryside into a desert? Have you heard no tales of their Black Prince who was blacker than the devil himself, or of the English king's father?

JOAN. You must not be afraid, Robert—

ROBERT. Damn you, I am not afraid And who gave you leave to call me Robert?

JOAN You were called so in church in the name of our Lord. All the other names are your father's or your brother's or anybody's.

ROBERT Tchal!

JOAN Listen to me, squire At Domrémy we had to fly to the next village to escape from the English soldiers Three of them were left behind, wounded I came to know these three poor goddams quite well They had not half my strength

ROBERT Do you know why they are called goddams?

JOAN No Everyone calls them goddams

ROBERT It is because they are always calling on their God to condemn their souls to perdition That is what goddam means in their language How do you like it?

JOAN God will be merciful to them, and they will act like His good children when they go back to the country He made for them, and made them for I have heard the tales of the Black Prince The moment he touched the soil of our country the devil entered into him and made him a black fiend But at home, in the place made for him by God, he was good It is always so If I went into England against the will of God to conquer England, and tried to live there and speak its language, the devil would enter into me, and when I was old I should shudder to remember the wickednesses I did.

ROBERT Perhaps But the more devil you were the better you might fight That is why the goddams will take Orleans And you cannot stop them, nor ten thousand like you

JOAN One thousand like me can stop them Ten like me can stop them with God on our side [*She rises impetuously, and goes at him, unable to sit quiet any longer*] You do not understand, squire Our soldiers are always beaten because they are fighting only to save their skins, and the shortest way to save your skin is to run away Our knights are thinking only of the money they will make in ransoms it is not kill or be killed with them, but pay or be paid But I will teach them all to fight that the will of God may be done in France, and then they will drive the poor goddams before them like sheep You and Polly will live to see the day when there will not be an English soldier on the soil of France, and there will be but one king there not the feudal English king, but God's French one

ROBERT [*to Poulengy*] This may be all rot, Polly, but the troops might swallow it, though nothing that we can say seems able to put any fight into them. Even the Dauphin

might swallow it And if she can put fight into him, she can put it into anybody

POULENGEY I can see no harm in trying Can you? And there is something about the girl—

ROBERT [*turning to Joan*] Now listen you to me; and [*desperately*] dont cut in before I have time to think

JOAN [*plumping down on the stool again, like an obedient schoolgirl*] Yes, squire

ROBERT Your orders are, that you are to go to Chunon under the escort of this gentleman and three of his friends

JOAN [*radiant, clasping her hands*] Oh, squire! Your head is all circled with light, like a saint's

POULENGEY How is she to get into the royal presence?

ROBERT [*who has looked up for his halo rather apprehensively*] I dont know how did she get into my presence? If the Dauphin can keep her out he is a better man than I take him for [*Rising*] I will send her to Chunon, and she can say I sent her. Then let come what may I can do no more

JOAN And the dress? I may have a soldier's dress, maynt I, squire?

ROBERT Have what you please I wash my hands of it

JOAN [*wildly excited by her success*] Come, Polly [*She dashes out*]

ROBERT [*shaking Poulengy's hand*] Good-bye, old man, I am taking a big chance Few other men would have done it But as you say, there is something about her

POULENGEY Yes there is something about her Goodbye [*He goes out*]

Robert, still very doubtful whether he has not been made a fool of by a crazy female, and a social inferior to boot, scratches his head and slowly comes back from the door

The steward runs in with a basket

STEWARD Sir, sir—

ROBERT What now?

STEWARD The hens are laying like mad, sir Five dozen eggs!

ROBERT [*stiffens convulsively, crosses himself, and forms with his pale lips the words*] Christ in heaven! [*Aloud but breathless*] She did come from God

SCENE II

Chunon, in Touraine An end of the throne-room in the castle, curtained off to make an antechamber The Archbishop of Rheims, close on

50, a full-fed political prelate with nothing of the ecclesiastic about him except his imposing bearing, and the Lord Chamberlain, Monseigneur de la Trémouille, a monstrous arrogant wineskin of a man, are waiting for the Dauphin. There is a door in the wall to the right of the two men. It is late in the afternoon on the 8th of March, 1429. The Archbishop stands with dignity whilst the Chamberlain, on his left, fumes about in the worst of tempers.

LA TRÉMOUILLE What the devil does the Dauphin mean by keeping us waiting like this? I don't know how you have the patience to stand there like a stone idol.

THE ARCHBISHOP. You see, I am an archbishop, and an archbishop is a sort of idol. At any rate he has to learn to keep still and suffer fools patiently. Besides my dear Lord Chamberlain, it is the Dauphin's royal privilege to keep you waiting, is it not?

LA TRÉMOUILLE Dauphin be damned! saving your reverence. Do you know how much money he owes me?

THE ARCHBISHOP Much more than he owes me, I have no doubt, because you are a much richer man. But I take it he owes you all you could afford to lend him. That is what he owes me.

LA TRÉMOUILLE Twentyseven thousand. that was his last haul. A cool twentyseven thousand!

THE ARCHBISHOP What becomes of it all? He never has a suit of clothes that I would throw to a curate.

LA TRÉMOUILLE He dines on a chicken or a scrap of mutton. He borrows my last penny, and there is nothing to shew for it. [*A page appears in the doorway*] At last!

THE PAGE No, my lord it is not His Majesty Monsieur de Rais is approaching.

LA TRÉMOUILLE Young Bluebeard! Why announce him?

THE PAGE Captain La Hire is with him. Something has happened, I think.

Gilles de Rais, a young man of 25, very smart and self-possessed, and sporting the extravagance of a little curled beard dyed blue at a clean-shaven court, comes in. He is determined to make himself agreeable, but lacks natural joyousness, and is not really pleasant. In fact when he defies the Church some eleven years later he is accused of trying to extract pleasure from horrible cruelties, and hanged. So far, however, there is no shadow of the gallows on him. He advances gaily to the Archbishop. The page withdraws.

BLUEBEARD Your faithful lamb, Archbishop. Good day, my lord. Do you know what has happened to La Hire?

LA TRÉMOUILLE He has sworn himself into a fit, perhaps.

BLUEBEARD No. just the opposite. Foul Mouthed Frank, the only man in Touraine who could beat him at swearing, was told by a soldier that he shouldn't use such language when he was at the point of death.

THE ARCHBISHOP Nor at any other point. But was Foul Mouthed Frank on the point of death?

BLUEBEARD Yes. he has just fallen into a well and been drowned. La Hire is frightened out of his wits.

Captain La Hire comes in. a war dog with no court manners and pronounced camp ones.

BLUEBEARD I have just been telling the Chamberlain and the Archbishop. The Archbishop says you are a lost man.

LA HIRE [*striding past Bluebeard, and planting himself between the Archbishop and La Trémouille*] This is nothing to joke about. It is worse than we thought. It was not a soldier, but an angel dressed as a soldier.

THE ARCHBISHOP } [*exclaiming all together*]
THE CHAMBERLAIN } An angel!
BLUEBEARD }

LA HIRE Yes, an angel. She has made her way from Champagne with half a dozen men through the thick of everything. Burgundians, Goddams, deserters, robbers, and Lord knows who, and they never met a soul except the country folk. I know one of them. de Poulengey. He says she's an angel. If ever I utter an oath again may my soul be blasted to eternal damnation!

THE ARCHBISHOP. A very pious beginning, Captain.

Bluebeard and La Trémouille laugh at him. The page returns.

THE PAGE His Majesty

They stand perfunctorily at court attention. The Dauphin, aged 26, really King Charles the Seventh since the death of his father, but as yet uncrowned, comes in through the curtains with a paper in his hands. He is a poor creature physically; and the current fashion of shaving closely, and hiding every scrap of hair under the head-covering or headdress, both by women and men, makes the worst of his appearance. He has little narrow eyes, near together, a long pendulous nose that droops over his thick short upper lip, and the expression of a young dog accustomed to be

kicked, yet incorrigible and irrepressible But he is neither vulgar nor stupid, and he has a cheeky humor which enables him to hold his own in conversation Just at present he is excited, like a child with a new toy He comes to the Archbishop's left hand Bluebeard and La Hire retire towards the curtains

CHARLES Oh, Archbishop, do you know what Robert de Baudricourt is sending me from Vaucouleurs?

THE ARCHBISHOP [*contemptuously*] I am not interested in the newest toys

CHARLES [*indignantly*] It isn't a toy [*Sulkily*] However, I can get on very well without your interest

THE ARCHBISHOP Your Highness is taking offence very unnecessarily

CHARLES Thank you You are always ready with a lecture, arn't you?

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*roughly*] Enough grumbling What have you got there?

CHARLES What is that to you?

LA TRÉMOUILLE It is my business to know what is passing between you and the garrison at Vaucouleurs [*He snatches the paper from the Dauphin's hand, and begins reading it with some difficulty, following the words with his finger and spelling them out syllable by syllable*]

CHARLES [*mortified*] You all think you can treat me as you please because I owe you money, and because I am no good at fighting But I have the blood royal in my veins

THE ARCHBISHOP Even that has been questioned, your Highness One hardly recognizes in you the grandson of Charles the Wise

CHARLES I want to hear no more of my grandfather He was so wise that he used up the whole family stock of wisdom for five generations, and left me the poor fool I am, bullied and insulted by all of you

THE ARCHBISHOP Control yourself, sir These outbursts of petulance are not seemly

CHARLES Another lecture! Thank you What a pity it is that though you are an archbishop saints and angels don't come to see you!

THE ARCHBISHOP What do you mean?

CHARLES Aha! Ask that bully there [*pointing to La Trémouille*]

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*furious*] Hold your tongue Do you hear?

CHARLES Oh, I hear You needn't shout The whole castle can hear Why don't you go and shout at the English, and beat them

for me?

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*raising his fist*] You young—
CHARLES [*running behind the Archbishop*] Don't you raise your hand to me It's high treason

LA HIRE Steady, Duke! Steady!

THE ARCHBISHOP [*resolutely*] Come, come! this will not do My lord Chamberlain please! please! we must keep some sort of order [*To the Dauphin*] And you, sir if you cannot rule your kingdom, at least try to rule yourself

CHARLES Another lecture! Thank you

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*handing the paper to the Archbishop*] Here read the accursed thing for me. He has sent the blood boiling into my head I can't distinguish the letters

CHARLES [*coming back and peering round La Trémouille's left shoulder*] I will read it for you if you like I can read, you know

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*with intense contempt, not at all stung by the taunt*] Yes reading is about all you are fit for Can you make it out, Archbishop?

THE ARCHBISHOP. I should have expected more commonsense from De Baudricourt He is sending some cracked country lass here—

CHARLES [*interrupting*] No he is sending a saint an angel And she is coming to me to me, the king, and not to you, Archbishop, holy as you are She knows the blood royal if you don't [*He struts up to the curtains between Bluebeard and La Hire*]

THE ARCHBISHOP You cannot be allowed to see this crazy wench

CHARLES [*turning*] But I am the king, and I will

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*brutally*] Then she cannot be allowed to see you Now!

CHARLES I tell you I will. I am going to put my foot down—

BLUEBEARD [*laughing at him*] Naughty! What would your wise grandfather say?

CHARLES That just shews your ignorance, Bluebeard My grandfather had a saint who used to float in the air when she was praying, and told him everything he wanted to know My poor father had two saints, Marie de Maillé and the Gasque of Avignon It is in our family, and I don't care what you say I will have my saint too

THE ARCHBISHOP This creature is not a saint She is not even a respectable woman. She does not wear women's clothes She is dressed like a soldier, and rides round the

country with soldiers Do you suppose such a person can be admitted to your Highness's court?

LA HIRE Stop [*Going to the Archbishop*] Did you say a girl in armor, like a soldier?

THE ARCHBISHOP. So De Baudricourt describes her

LA HIRE But by all the devils in hell— Oh, God forgive me, what am I saying?—by Our Lady and all the saints, this must be the angel that struck Foul Mouthed Frank dead for swearing

CHARLES [*triumphant*] You see! A miracle!

LA HIRE She may strike the lot of us dead if we cross her For Heaven's sake, Archbishop, be careful what you are doing

THE ARCHBISHOP [*severely*] Rubbish! Nobody has been struck dead A drunken blackguard who has been rebuked a hundred times for swearing has fallen into a well and been drowned. A mere coincidence

LA HIRE. I do not know what a coincidence is I do know that the man is dead, and that she told him he was going to die

THE ARCHBISHOP. We are all going to die, Captain.

LA HIRE [*crossing himself*] I hope not. [*He backs out of the conversation*]

BLUEBEARD We can easily find out whether she is an angel or not. Let us arrange when she comes that I shall be the Dauphin, and see whether she will find me out

CHARLES Yes I agree to that. If she cannot find the blood royal I will have nothing to do with her

THE ARCHBISHOP. It is for the Church to make saints: let De Baudricourt mind his own business, and not dare usurp the function of his priest I say the girl shall not be admitted.

BLUEBEARD. But, Archbishop—

THE ARCHBISHOP [*sternly*] I speak in the Church's name [*To the Dauphin*] Do you dare say she shall?

CHARLES [*intimidated but sulky*] Oh, if you make it an excommunication matter, I have nothing more to say, of course But you havnt read the end of the letter De Baudricourt says she will raise the siege of Orleans, and beat the English for us.

LA TRÉMOUILLE. Rot!

CHARLES. Well, will you save Orleans for us, with all your bullying?

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*savagely*] Do not throw that in my face again do you hear? I have

done more fighting than you ever did or ever will. But I cannot be everywhere.

THE DAUPHIN. Well, thats something.

BLUEBEARD [*coming between the Archbishop and Charles*] You have Jack Dunois at the head of your troops in Orleans the brave Dunois, the handsome Dunois, the wonderful invincible Dunois, the darling of all the ladies, the beautiful bastard Is it likely that the country lass can do what he cannot do?

CHARLES Why doesnt he raise the siege, then?

LA HIRE. The wind is against him.

BLUEBEARD How can the wind hurt him at Orleans? It is not on the Channel

LA HIRE It is on the river Loire; and the English hold the bridgehead. He must ship his men across the river and upstream if he is to take them in the rear. Well, he cannot, because there is a devil of a wind blowing the other way He is tired of paying the priests to pray for a west wind What he needs is a miracle You tell me that what the girl did to Foul Mouthed Frank was no miracle. No matter: it finished Frank If she changes the wind for Dunois, that may not be a miracle either, but it may finish the English What harm is there in trying?

THE ARCHBISHOP [*who has read the end of the letter and become more thoughtful*] It is true that De Baudricourt seems extraordinarily impressed

LA HIRE De Baudricourt is a blazing ass; but he is a soldier, and if he thinks she can beat the English all the rest of the army will think so too

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*to the Archbishop, who is hesitating*] Oh, let them have their way Dunois' men will give up the town in spite of him if somebody does not put some fresh spunk into them

THE ARCHBISHOP. The Church must examine the girl before anything decisive is done about her However, since his Highness desires it, let her attend the Court

LA HIRE I will find her and tell her. [*He goes out*].

CHARLES Come with me, Bluebeard, and let us arrange so that she will not know who I am You will pretend to be me [*He goes out through the curtains*].

BLUEBEARD Pretend to be that thing! Holy Michael! [*He follows the Dauphin*]

LA TRÉMOUILLE I wonder will she pick him out!

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

THE ARCHBISHOP Of course she will
LA TRÉMOUILLE Why? How is she to know?

THE ARCHBISHOP She will know what everybody in Chimon knows that the Dauphin is the meanest-looking and worst-dressed figure in the Court, and that the man with the blue beard is Gilles de Rais

LA TRÉMOUILLE I never thought of that.
THE ARCHBISHOP You are not so accustomed to miracles as I am It is part of my profession

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*puzzled and a little scandalized*] But that would not be a miracle at all
THE ARCHBISHOP [*calmly*] Why not?

LA TRÉMOUILLE Well, come! what is a miracle?

THE ARCHBISHOP A miracle, my friend, is an event which creates faith That is the purpose and nature of miracles They may seem very wonderful to the people who witness them, and very simple to those who perform them That does not matter if they confirm or create faith they are true miracles

LA TRÉMOUILLE Even when they are frauds, do you mean?

THE ARCHBISHOP Frauds deceive An event which creates faith does not deceive therefore it is not a fraud, but a miracle

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*scratching his neck in his perplexity*] Well, I suppose as you are an archbishop you must be right It seems a bit fishy to me But I am no churchman, and don't understand these matters

THE ARCHBISHOP You are not a churchman, but you are a diplomatist and a soldier Could you make our citizens pay war taxes, or our soldiers sacrifice their lives, if they knew what is really happening?

LA TRÉMOUILLE No, by Saint Dennis the fat would be in the fire before sundown

THE ARCHBISHOP Would it not be quite easy to tell them the truth?

LA TRÉMOUILLE Man alive, they wouldn't believe it

THE ARCHBISHOP Just so Well, the Church has to rule men for the good of their souls as you have to rule them for the good of their bodies To do that, the Church must do as you do nourish their faith by poetry

LA TRÉMOUILLE Poetry! I should call it humbug

THE ARCHBISHOP You would be wrong, my friend. Parables are not lies because they describe events that have never happened.

Miracles are not frauds because they are often—I do not say always—very simple and innocent contrivances by which the priest picks out the Dauphin among his courtiers, it will not be a miracle for me, because I shall know how it has been done, and my faith will not be increased But as for the others, if they feel the thrill of the supernatural, and forget their sinful clay in a sudden sense of the glory of God, it will be a miracle and a blessed one And you will find that the girl herself will be more affected than anyone else She will forget how she really picked him out So, perhaps, will you

LA TRÉMOUILLE Well, I wish I were clever enough to know how much of you is God's archbishop and how much the most artful fox in Touraine Come on, or we shall be late for the fun, and I want to see it, miracle or no miracle

THE ARCHBISHOP [*detaining him a moment*] Do not think that I am a lover of crooked ways There is a new spirit rising in men we are at the dawning of a wider epoch If I were a simple monk, and had not to rule men, I should seek peace for my spirit with Aristotle and Pythagoras rather than with the saints and their miracles

LA TRÉMOUILLE And who the deuce was Pythagoras?

THE ARCHBISHOP A sage who held that the earth is round, and that it moves round the sun

LA TRÉMOUILLE What an utter fool! Couldn't he use his eyes?

They go out together through the curtains, which are presently withdrawn, revealing the full depth of the throne-room with the Court assembled On the right are two Chairs of State on a dais Bluebeard is standing theatrically on the dais, playing the king, and, like the courtiers, enjoying the joke rather obviously There is a curtained arch in the wall behind the dais, but the main door, guarded by men-at-arms, is at the other side of the room, and a clear path across is kept and lined by the courtiers Charles is in this path in the middle of the room La Hire is on his right The Archbishop, on his left, has taken his place by the dais La Trémouille, pretending of it The Duchess de la Trémouille, pretending to be the Queen, sits in the Consort's chair, with a group of ladies in waiting close by, behind the Archbishop

The chatter of the courtiers makes such a noise

that nobody notices the appearance of the page at the door

THE PAGE The Duke of— [*Nobody listens*]. The Duke of— [*The chatter continues Indignant at his failure to command a hearing, he snatches the halberd of the nearest man-at-arms, and thumps the floor with it The chatter ceases, and everybody looks at him in silence*]. Attention! [*He restores the halberd to the man-at-arms*] The Duke of Vendôme presents Joan the Maid to his Majesty

CHARLES [*putting his finger on his lip*] Ssh! [*He hides behind the nearest courtier, peering out to see what happens*]

BLUEBEARD [*majestically*] Let her approach the throne.

Joan, dressed as a soldier, with her hair bobbed and hanging thickly round her face, is led in by a bashful and speechless nobleman, from whom she detaches herself to stop and look round eagerly for the Dauphin

THE DUCHESS [*to the nearest lady in waiting*] My dear! Her hair!

All the ladies explode in uncontrollable laughter.

BLUEBEARD [*trying not to laugh, and waving his hand in deprecation of their merriment*] Ssh—ssh! Ladies! Ladies!

JOAN [*not at all embarrassed*] I wear it like this because I am a soldier Where be Dauphin?

A titter runs through the Court as she walks to the dais

BLUEBEARD [*condescendingly*] You are in the presence of the Dauphin.

Joan looks at him sceptically for a moment, scanning him hard up and down to make sure. Dead silence, all watching her. Fun dawns in her face.

JOAN. Coom, Bluebeard! Thou canst not fool me. Where be Dauphin?

A roar of laughter breaks out as Gilles, with a gesture of surrender, joins in the laugh, and jumps down from the dais beside La Trémouille Joan, also on the broad grin, turns back, searching along the row of courtiers, and presently makes a dive, and drags out Charles by the arm

JOAN [*releasing him and bobbing him a little curtsy*] Gentle little Dauphin, I am sent to you to drive the English away from Orleans and from France, and to crown you king in the cathedral at Rheims, where all true kings of France are crowned.

CHARLES [*triumphant, to the Court*] You see, all of you. she knew the blood royal Who

dare say now that I am not my father's son [*To Joan*] But if you want me to be crowned at Rheims you must talk to the Archbishop, not to me There he is [*he is standing behind her*]

JOAN [*turning quickly, overwhelmed with emotion*] Oh, my lord! [*She falls on both knees before him, with bowed head, not daring to look up*] My lord. I am only a poor country girl; and you are filled with the blessedness and glory of God Himself, but you will touch me with your hands, and give me your blessing, wont you?

BLUEBEARD [*whispering to La Trémouille*] The old fox blushes

LA TRÉMOUILLE. Another miracle!

THE ARCHBISHOP [*touched, putting his hand on her head*] Child: you are in love with religion

JOAN [*startled, looking up at him*] Am I? I never thought of that. Is there any harm in it?

THE ARCHBISHOP. There is no harm in it, my child But there is danger.

JOAN [*rising, with a sunflush of reckless happiness irradiating her face*] There is always danger, except in heaven Oh, my lord, you have given me such strength, such courage. It must be a most wonderful thing to be Archbishop.

The Court smiles broadly, even titters a little

THE ARCHBISHOP [*drawing himself up sensitively*] Gentlemen your levity is rebuked by this maid's faith I am, God help me, all unworthy, but your mirth is a deadly sin

Their faces fall. Dead silence

BLUEBEARD. My lord we were laughing at her, not at you

THE ARCHBISHOP What? Not at my unworthiness but at her faith! Gilles de Rais: this maid prophesied that the blasphemer should be drowned in his sin—

JOAN [*distressed*] No!

THE ARCHBISHOP [*silencing her by a gesture*] I prophesy now that you will be hanged in yours if you do not learn when to laugh and when to pray.

BLUEBEARD My lord I stand rebuked. I am sorry I can say no more But if you prophesy that I shall be hanged, I shall never be able to resist temptation, because I shall always be telling myself that I may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb

The courtiers take heart at this There is more tittering

JOAN [*scandalized*] You are an idle fellow,

Bluebeard, and you have great impudence to answer the Archbishop

LA HIRE [*with a huge chuckle*] Well said, lass! Well said!

JOAN [*impatiently to the Archbishop*] Oh, my lord, will you send all these silly folks away so that I may speak to the Dauphin alone?

LA HIRE [*goodhumoredly*] I can take a hint [*He salutes, turns on his heel, and goes out*]

THE ARCHBISHOP Come, gentlemen The Maid comes with God's blessing, and must be obeyed.

The courtiers withdraw, some through the arch, others at the opposite side The Archbishop marches across to the door, followed by the Duchess and La Trémouille As the Archbishop passes Joan she falls on her knees, and kisses the hem of his robe fervently He shakes his head in instinctive remonstrance, gathers the robe from her, and goes out She is left kneeling directly in the Duchess's way

THE DUCHESS [*coldly*] Will you allow me to pass, please?

JOAN [*hastily rising, and standing back*] Beg pardon, maam, I am sure

The Duchess passes on Joan stares after her, then whispers to the Dauphin

JOAN Be that Queen!

CHARLES No She thinks she is

JOAN [*again staring after the Duchess*] Oo-oo-oo! [*Her awestruck amazement at the figure cut by the magnificently dressed lady is not wholly complimentary*]

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*very surly*] I'll trouble your Highness not to gibe at my wife [*He goes out The others have already gone*]

JOAN [*to the Dauphin*] Who be old Gruff-and-Grum?

CHARLES He is the Duke de la Trémouille

JOAN What be his job?

CHARLES He pretends to command the army And whenever I find a friend I can care for, he kills him

JOAN Why dost let him?

CHARLES [*petulantly moving to the throne side of the room to escape from her magnetic field*] How can I prevent him? He bullies me They all bully me

JOAN Art afraid?

CHARLES Yes I am afraid It's no use preaching to me about it It's all very well for these big men with their armor that is too heavy for me, and their swords that I can hardly lift, and their muscle and their shouting and their bad tempers They like fighting

most of them are making fools of themselves all the time they are not fighting, but I am quiet and sensible, and I dont want to kill people I only want to be left alone to enjoy myself in my own way I never asked to be a king it was pushed on me. So if you are going to say "Son of St Louis gurd on the sword of your ancestors, and lead us to victory" you may spare your breath to cool your porridge, for I cannot do it I am not built that way, and there is an end of it

JOAN [*trenchant and masterful*] Blethers! We are all like that to begin with I shall put courage into thee

CHARLES But I dont want to have courage put into me I want to sleep in a comfortable bed, and not live in continual terror of being killed or wounded Put courage into the others, and let them have their bellyful of fighting, but let me alone

JOAN It's no use, Charlie thou must face what God puts on thee If thou fail to make thyself king, thoult be a beggar what else art fit for? Come! Let me see thee sitting on the throne I have looked forward to that.

CHARLES What is the good of sitting on the throne when the other fellows give all the orders? However! [*he sits enthroned, a piteous figure*] here is the king for you! Look your fill at the poor devil

JOAN Thout not king yet, lad thout but Dauphin Be not led away by them around thee Dressing up dont fill empty noddle I know the people the real people that make thy bread for thee, and I tell thee they count no man king of France until the holy oil has been poured on his hair, and himself consecrated and crowned in Rheims Cathedral And thou needs new clothes, Charlie Why does not Queen look after thee properly?

CHARLES We're too poor She wants all the money we can spare to put on her own back Besides, I like to see her beautifully dressed, and I dont care what I wear myself I should look ugly anyhow

JOAN There is some good in thee, Charlie, but it is not yet a king's good

CHARLES We shall see I am not such a fool as I look. I have my eyes open, and I can tell you that one good treaty is worth ten good fights These fighting fellows lose all on the treaties that they gam on the fights If we can only have a treaty, the English are sure to have the worst of it, because they are better at fighting than at thinking

JOAN If the English win, it is they that will make the treaty, and then God help poor France! Thou must fight, Charlie, whether thou wilt or no I will go first to hearten thee We must take our courage in both hands. Aye, and pray for it with both hands too.

CHARLES [*descending from his throne and again crossing the room to escape from her dominating urgency*] Oh do stop talking about God and praying. I cant bear people who are always praying Isnt it bad enough to have to do it at the proper times?

JOAN [*putting him*] Thou poor child, thou hast never prayed in thy life I must teach thee from the beginning

CHARLES. I am not a child I am a grown man and a father, and I will not be taught any more.

JOAN. Aye, you have a little son He that will be Louis the Eleventh when you die Would you not fight for him?

CHARLES. No! a horrid boy He hates me He hates everybody, selfish little beast! I dont want to be bothered with children I dont want to be a father; and I dont want to be a son: especially a son of St Louis I dont want to be any of these fine things you all have your heads full of I want to be just what I am Why cant you mind your own business, and let me mind mine?

JOAN [*again contemptuous*] Minding your own business is like minding your own body it's the shortest way to make yourself sick. What is my business? Helping mother at home. What is thine? Petting lapdogs and sucking sugarsticks I call that muck I tell thee it is God's business we are here to do: not our own I have a message to thee from God, and thou must listen to it, though thy heart break with the terror of it

CHARLES I dont want a message; but can you tell me any secrets? Can you do any cures? Can you turn lead into gold, or anything of that sort?

JOAN I can turn thee into a king, in Rheims Cathedral, and that is a miracle that will take some doing, it seems

CHARLES If we go to Rheims, and have a coronation, Anne will want new dresses We cant afford them I am all right as I am.

JOAN As you are! And what is that? Less than my father's poorest shepherd Thou art not lawful owner of thy own land of France till thou be consecrated.

CHARLES But I shall not be lawful owner of

my own land anyhow Will the consecration pay off my mortgages? I have pledged my last acre to the Archbishop and that fat bully I owe money even to Bluebeard

JOAN [*earnestly*] Charhe I come from the land, and have gotten my strength working on the land, and I tell thee that the land is thine to rule righteously and keep God's peace in, and not to pledge at the pawnshop as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes And I come from God to tell thee to kneel in the cathedral and solemnly give thy kingdom to Him for ever and ever, and become the greatest king in the world as His steward and His bailiff, His soldier and His servant The very clay of France will become holy her soldiers will be the soldiers of God the rebel dukes will be rebels against God the English will fall on their knees and beg thee let them return to their lawful homes in peace Wilt be a poor little Judas, and betray me and Him that sent me?

CHARLES [*tempted at last*] Oh, if I only dare!
JOAN I shall dare, dare, and dare again, in God's name! Art for or against me?

CHARLES [*excited*] I'll risk it I warn you I shant be able to keep it up, but I'll risk it You shall see [*Running to the main door and shouting*] Hallo! Come back, everybody [*To Joan, as he runs back to the arch opposite*] Mind you stand by and dont let me be bullied [*Through the arch*] Come along, will you the whole Court [*He sits down in the royal chair as they all hurry in to their former places, chattering and wondering*] Now I'm in for it, but no matter here goes! [*To the page*] Call for silence, you little beast, will you?

THE PAGE [*snatching a halberd as before and thumping with it repeatedly*] Silence for His Majesty the King The King speaks [*Peremptorily*] Will you be silent there? [*Silence*]

CHARLES [*rising*] I have given the command of the army to The Maid The Maid is to do as she likes with it [*He descends from the dais*]

General amazement. La Hire, delighted, slaps his steel thigh-piece with his gauntlet

LA TRÉMOUILLE [*turning threateningly towards Charles*] What is this? I command the army.

Joan quickly puts her hand on Charles's shoulder as he instinctively recoils. Charles, with a grotesque effort culminating in an extravagant gesture, snaps his fingers in the Chamberlain's face

JOAN. Thou art answered, old Gruff - and -

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

Grum [*Suddenly flashing out her sword as she divines that her moment has come*] Who is for God and His Maid? Who is for Orleans with me?

LA HIRE [*carried away, drawing also*] For God and His Maid! To Orleans!

ALL THE KNIGHTS [*following his lead with enthusiasm*] To Orleans!

Joan, radiant, falls on her knees in thanksgiving to God. They all kneel, except the Archbishop, who gives his benediction with a sign, and La Trémouille, who collapses, cursing

SCENE III

Orleans, May 29th, 1429. Dunois, aged 26, is pacing up and down a patch of ground on the south bank of the silver Loire, commanding a long view of the river in both directions. He has had his lance stuck up with a pennon, which streams in a strong east wind. His shield with its bend sinister lies beside it. He has his commander's baton in his hand. He is well built, carrying his armor easily. His broad brow and pointed chin give him an equilaterally triangular face, already marked by active service and responsibility, with the expression of a goodnatured and capable man who has no affectations and no foolish illusions. His page is sitting on the ground, elbows on knees, cheeks on fists, idly watching the water. It is evening, and both man and boy are affected by the loveliness of the Loire.

DUNOIS [*halting for a moment to glance up at the streaming pennon and shake his head wearily before he resumes his pacing*] West wind, west wind, west wind. Strumpet! Steadfast when you should be wanton, wanton when you should be steadfast. West wind on the silver Loire! What rhymes to Loire? [*He looks again at the pennon, and shakes his fist at it*] Change, curse you, change, English harlot of a wind, change! West, west, I tell you. [*With a growl he resumes his march in silence, but soon begins again*] West wind, wanton wind, wilful wind, womanish wind, false wind from over the water, will you never blow again?

THE PAGE [*bounding to his feet*] See! There! There she goes!

DUNOIS [*startled from his reverie*] Where? Who? The Maid?

THE PAGE No the kingfisher. Like blue lightning. She went into that bush.

DUNOIS [*furiously disappointed*] Is that all? You infernal young idiot. I have a mind to pitch you into the river.

THE PAGE [*not afraid, knowing his man*] It looked frightfully jolly, that flash of blue. Look! There goes the other!

DUNOIS [*running eagerly to the river brim*] Where? Where?

THE PAGE [*pointing*] Passing the reeds. DUNOIS [*delighted*] I see.

THE PAGE You blew me up because you were not in time to see them yesterday.

DUNOIS You knew I was expecting. The Maid when you set up your yelping. I will give you something to yelp for next time.

THE PAGE Arnt they lovely? I wish I could catch them.

DUNOIS Let me catch you trying to trap them, and I will put you in the iron cage for a month to teach you what a cage feels like.

THE PAGE [*laughs, and squats down as before*] You are an abominable boy.

DUNOIS [*pacing*] Blue bird, blue bird, since I am friend to thee, change thou the wind for me. No it does not rhyme. He who has sinned for thee that's better. No sense in it, though. [*He finds himself close to the page*] You abominable boy! [*He turns away from him*] Mary in the blue snood, kingfisher color will you grudge me a west wind?

A SENTRY'S VOICE WESTWARD Halt! Who goes there?

JOAN'S VOICE The Maid.

DUNOIS Let her pass. Hither, Maid! To me! Joan, in splendid armor, rushes in in a blazing rage. The wind drops, and the pennon flaps idly down the lance, but Dunois is too much occupied with Joan to notice it.

JOAN [*bluntly*] Be you Bastard of Orleans?

DUNOIS [*cool and stern, pointing to his shield*] You see the bend sinister. Are you Joan the Maid?

JOAN Sure.

DUNOIS Where are your troops?

JOAN Miles behind. They have cheated me. They have brought me to the wrong side of the river.

DUNOIS I told them to.

JOAN Why did you? The English are on the other side!

DUNOIS The English are on both sides.

JOAN But Orleans is on the other side. We must fight the English there. How can we cross the river?

DUNOIS [*grimly*] There is a bridge.

JOAN In God's name, then, let us cross the bridge, and fall on them.

DUNOIS It seems simple, but it cannot be done

JOAN Who says so?

DUNOIS I say so; and older and wiser heads than mine are of the same opinion

JOAN [*roundly*] Then your older and wiser heads are fatheads. they have made a fool of you, and now they want to make a fool of me too, bringing me to the wrong side of the river Do you not know that I bring you better help than ever came to any general or any town?

DUNOIS [*smiling patiently*] Your own?

JOAN. No. the help and counsel of the King of Heaven Which is the way to the bridge?

DUNOIS You are impatient, Maid.

JOAN. Is this a time for patience? Our enemy is at our gates, and here we stand doing nothing Oh, why are you not fighting? Listen to me. I will deliver you from fear I—

DUNOIS [*laughing heartily, and waving her off*] No, no, my girl if you delivered me from fear I should be a good knight for a story book, but a very bad commander of the army. Come! let me begin to make a soldier of you [*He takes her to the water's edge*] Do you see those two forts at this end of the bridge? the big ones?

JOAN Yes Are they ours or the goddams'?

DUNOIS Be quiet, and listen to me. If I were in either of those forts with only ten men I could hold it against an army The English have more than ten times ten goddams in those forts to hold them against us

JOAN They cannot hold them against God God did not give them the land under those forts. they stole it from Him He gave it to us I will take those forts

DUNOIS Single-handed?

JOAN Our men will take them I will lead them

DUNOIS Not a man will follow you.

JOAN I will not look back to see whether anyone is following me.

DUNOIS [*recognizing her mettle, and clapping her heartily on the shoulder*] Good You have the makings of a soldier in you You are in love with war.

JOAN [*startled*] Oh! And the Archbishop said I was in love with religion.

DUNOIS. I, God forgive me, am a little in love with war myself, the ugly devil! I am like a man with two wives Do you want to be like a woman with two husbands?

JOAN [*matter-of-fact*] I will never take a

husband A man in Toul took an action against me for breach of promise; but I never promised him I am a soldier: I do not want to be thought of as a woman I will not dress as a woman. I do not care for the things women care for. They dream of lovers, and of money. I dream of leading a charge, and of placing the big guns You soldiers do not know how to use the big guns you think you can win battles with a great noise and smoke

DUNOIS [*with a shrug*] True Half the time the artillery is more trouble than it is worth

JOAN. Aye, lad; but you cannot fight stone walls with horses: you must have guns, and much bigger guns too

DUNOIS [*grinning at her familiarity, and echoing it*] Aye, lass; but a good heart and a stout ladder will get over the stoniest wall

JOAN. I will be first up the ladder when we reach the fort, Bastard I dare you to follow me

DUNOIS You must not dare a staff officer, Joan: only company officers are allowed to indulge in displays of personal courage. Besides, you must know that I welcome you as a saint, not as a soldier I have daredevils enough at my call, if they could help me.

JOAN. I am not a daredevil I am a servant of God. My sword is sacred. I found it behind the altar in the church of St Catherine, where God hid it for me; and I may not strike a blow with it My heart is full of courage, not of anger. I will lead; and your men will follow. that is all I can do But I must do it you shall not stop me

DUNOIS All in good time. Our men cannot take those forts by a sally across the bridge They must come by water, and take the English in the rear on this side

JOAN [*her military sense asserting itself*] Then make rafts and put big guns on them; and let your men cross to us.

DUNOIS. The rafts are ready, and the men are embarked. But they must wait for God

JOAN. What do you mean? God is waiting for them.

DUNOIS Let Him send us a wind then My boats are downstream they cannot come up against both wind and current We must wait until God changes the wind Come let me take you to the church

JOAN No I love church; but the English will not yield to prayers they understand nothing but hard knocks and slashes I will not go to church until we have beaten them.

DUNOIS You must I have business for you there

JOAN What business?

DUNOIS To pray for a west wind I have prayed, and I have given two silver candlesticks, but my prayers are not answered Yours may be you are young and innocent

JOAN Oh yes you are right I will pray I will tell St Catherine she will make God give me a west wind. Quick shew me the way to the church

THE PAGE [*sneezes violently*] At-cha!!!

JOAN God bless you, child! Coom, Bastard They go out The page rises to follow He picks up the shield, and is taking the spear as well when he notices the pennon, which is now streaming eastward

THE PAGE [*dropping the shield and calling excitedly after them*] Seigneur! Seigneur! Mademoiselle!

DUNOIS [*running back*] What is it? The kingfisher? [*He looks eagerly for it up the river*]

JOAN [*joining them*] Oh, a kingfisher! Where?

THE PAGE No the wind, the wind, the wind [*pointing to the pennon*] that is what made me sneeze

DUNOIS [*looking at the pennon*] The wind has changed [*He crosses himself*] God has spoken [*Kneeling and handing his baton to Joan*] You command the king's army I am your soldier

THE PAGE [*looking down the river*] The boats have put off They are ripping upstream like anything

DUNOIS [*rising*] Now for the forts You dared me to follow Dare you lead?

JOAN [*bursting into tears and flinging her arms round Dunois, kissing him on both cheeks*] Dunois, dear comrade in arms, help me My eyes are blinded with tears Set my foot on the ladder, and say "Up, Joan"

DUNOIS [*dragging her out*] Never mind the tears make for the flash of the guns

JOAN [*in a blaze of courage*] Ah!

DUNOIS [*dragging her along with him*] For God and Saint Dennis!

THE PAGE [*shrilly*] The Maid! The Maid! God and The Maid! Hurray-ay-ay! [*He snatches up the shield and lance, and capers out after them, mad with excitement*]

SCENE IV

A tent in the English camp A bullnecked English chaplain of 50 is sitting on a stool at a

table, hard at work writing At the other side of the table an imposing nobleman, aged 16, is seated in a handsome chair turning over the leaves of an illuminated Book of Hours The nobleman is enjoying himself the chaplain is struggling with suppressed wrath There is an unoccupied leather stool on the nobleman's left The table is on his right

THE NOBLEMAN Now this is what I call workmanship There is nothing on earth more exquisite than a bonny book, with well-placed columns of rich black writing in beautiful borders, and illuminated pictures cunningly inset But nowadays, instead of looking at books, people read them A book might as well be one of those orders for bacon and bran that you are scribbling

THE CHAPLAIN I must say, my lord, you take our situation very coolly Very coolly indeed

THE NOBLEMAN [*supercilious*] What is the matter?

THE CHAPLAIN The matter, my lord, is that we English have been defeated

THE NOBLEMAN That happens, you know It is only in history books and ballads that the enemy is always defeated

THE CHAPLAIN But we are being defeated over and over again First, Orleans—

THE NOBLEMAN [*poohpoohing*] Oh, Orleans!

THE CHAPLAIN I know what you are going to say, my lord that was a clear case of witchcraft and sorcery But we are still being defeated Jargeau, Meung, Beaugency, just like Orleans And now we have been butchered at Patay, and Sir John Talbot taken prisoner [*He throws down his pen, almost in tears*] I feel it, my lord I feel it very deeply I cannot bear to see my countrymen defeated by a parcel of foreigners

THE NOBLEMAN Oh! you are an Englishman, are you?

THE CHAPLAIN Certainly not, my lord I am a gentleman Still, like your lordship, I was born in England, and it makes a difference

THE NOBLEMAN You are attached to the soil, eh?

THE CHAPLAIN It pleases your lordship to be satirical at my expense your greatness privileges you to be so with impunity But your lordship knows very well that I am not attached to the soil in a vulgar manner, like a serf Still, I have a feeling about it, [*with growing agitation*] and I am not ashamed of it, and [*rising mildly*] by God, if this goes on

any longer I will fling my cassock to the devil, and take arms myself, and strangle the accursed witch with my own hands

THE NOBLEMAN [*laughing at him good-naturedly*] So you shall, chaplain. so you shall, if we can do nothing better But not yet, not quite yet

The Chaplain resumes his seat very sulkily

THE NOBLEMAN [*airily*] I should not care very much about the witch—you see, I have made my pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the Heavenly Powers, for their own credit, can hardly allow me to be worsted by a village sorceress—but the Bastard of Orleans is a harder nut to crack; and as he has been to the Holy Land too, honors are easy between us as far as that goes

THE CHAPLAIN. He is only a Frenchman, my lord.

THE NOBLEMAN A Frenchman! Where did you pick up that expression? Are these Burgundians and Bretons and Picards and Gascons beginning to call themselves Frenchmen, just as our fellows are beginning to call themselves Englishmen? They actually talk of France and England as their countries Theirs, if you please! What is to become of me and you if that way of thinking comes into fashion?

THE CHAPLAIN Why, my lord? Can it hurt us?

THE NOBLEMAN Men cannot serve two masters If this cant of serving their country once takes hold of them, goodbye to the authority of their feudal lords, and goodbye to the authority of the Church That is, goodbye to you and me

THE CHAPLAIN I hope I am a faithful servant of the Church, and there are only six cousins between me and the barony of Stogumber, which was created by the Conqueror But is that any reason why I should stand by and see Englishmen beaten by a French bastard and a witch from Lousy Champagne?

THE NOBLEMAN Easy, man, easy we shall burn the witch and beat the bastard all in good time Indeed I am waiting at present for the Bishop of Beauvais, to arrange the burning with him He has been turned out of his diocese by her faction

THE CHAPLAIN You have first to catch her, my lord

THE NOBLEMAN Or buy her I will offer a king's ransom.

THE CHAPLAIN A king's ransom! For that slut!

THE NOBLEMAN One has to leave a margin Some of Charles's people will sell her to the Burgundians, the Burgundians will sell her to us, and there will probably be three or four middlemen who will expect their little commissions

THE CHAPLAIN Monstrous It is all those scoundrels of Jews they get in every time money changes hands I would not leave a Jew alive in Christendom if I had my way

THE NOBLEMAN Why not? The Jews generally give value They make you pay, but they deliver the goods In my experience the men who want something for nothing are invariably Christians

A page appears

THE PAGE The Right Reverend the Bishop of Beauvais Monseigneur Cauchon

Cauchon, aged about 60, comes in The page withdraws The two Englishmen rise

THE NOBLEMAN [*with effusive courtesy*] My dear Bishop, how good of you to come! Allow me to introduce myself Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, at your service

CAUCHON Your lordship's fame is well known to me

WARWICK This reverend cleric is Master John de Stogumber

THE CHAPLAIN [*glbly*] John Bowyer Spenser Neville de Stogumber, at your service, my lord Bachelor of Theology, and Keeper of the Private Seal to His Eminence the Cardinal of Winchester

WARWICK [*to Cauchon*] You call him the Cardinal of England, I believe Our king's uncle.

CAUCHON Messire John de Stogumber: I am always the very good friend of His Eminence [*He extends his hand to the chaplain, who kisses his ring*]

WARWICK Do me the honor to be seated [*He gives Cauchon his chair, placing it at the head of the table*]

Cauchon accepts the place of honor with a grave inclination Warwick fetches the leather stool carelessly, and sits in his former place. The chaplain goes back to his chair

Though Warnick has taken second place in calculated deference to the Bishop, he assumes the lead in opening the proceedings as a matter of course. He is still cordial and expansive, but there is a new note in his voice which means that he is coming to business.

John? I knew your lordship would not fail us. Pardon my interruption Proceed

CAUCHON. If it be so, the devil has longer views than you give him credit for

WARWICK Indeed? In what way? Listen to this, Messire John

CAUCHON. If the devil wanted to damn a country girl, do you think so easy a task would cost him the winning of half a dozen battles? No, my lord. any trumpery imp could do that much if the girl could be damned at all. The Prince of Darkness does not condescend to such cheap drudgery. When he strikes, he strikes at the Catholic Church, whose realm is the whole spiritual world. When he damns, he damns the souls of the entire human race. Against that dreadful design the Church stands ever on guard. And it is as one of the instruments of that design that I see this girl. She is inspired, but diabolically inspired

THE CHAPLAIN. I told you she was a witch

CAUCHON [*fiercely*] She is not a witch. She is a heretic

THE CHAPLAIN. What difference does that make?

CAUCHON. You, a priest, ask me that! You English are strangely blunt in the mind. All these things that you call witchcraft are capable of a natural explanation. The woman's miracles would not impose on a rabbit. she does not claim them as miracles herself. What do her victories prove but that she has a better head on her shoulders than your swearing Glass-dells and mad bull Talbots, and that the courage of faith, even though it be a false faith, will always outstay the courage of wrath?

THE CHAPLAIN [*hardly able to believe his ears*] Does your lordship compare Sir John Talbot, three times Governor of Ireland, to a mad bull?!!!

WARWICK It would not be seemly for you to do so, Messire John, as you are still six removes from a barony. But as I am an earl, and Talbot is only a knight, I may make bold to accept the comparison. [*To the Bishop*] My lord I wipe the slate as far as the witchcraft goes. None the less, we must burn the woman

CAUCHON I cannot burn her. The Church cannot take life. And my first duty is to seek this girl's salvation

WARWICK No doubt. But you do burn people occasionally.

CAUCHON. No. When the Church cuts off an

obstinate heretic as a dead branch from the tree of life, the heretic is handed over to the secular arm. The Church has no part in what the secular arm may see fit to do

WARWICK. Precisely. And I shall be the secular arm in this case. Well, my lord, hand over your dead branch; and I will see that the fire is ready for it. If you will answer for the Church's part, I will answer for the secular part

CAUCHON [*with smouldering anger*] I can answer for nothing. You great lords are too prone to treat the Church as a mere political convenience

WARWICK [*smiling and propitiatory*] Not in England, I assure you

CAUCHON. In England more than anywhere else. No, my lord. the soul of this village girl is of equal value with yours or your king's before the throne of God; and my first duty is to save it. I will not suffer your lordship to smile at me as if I were repeating a meaningless form of words, and it were well understood between us that I should betray the girl to you. I am no mere political bishop. my faith is to me what your honor is to you; and if there be a loophole through which this baptized child of God can creep to her salvation, I shall guide her to it

THE CHAPLAIN [*rising in a fury*] You are a traitor

CAUCHON [*springing up*] You lie, priest [*Trembling with rage*] If you dare do what this woman has done—set your country above the holy Catholic Church—you shall go to the fire with her.

THE CHAPLAIN. My lord. I—I went too far. I— [*he sits down with a submissive gesture*]

WARWICK [*who has risen apprehensively*] My lord. I apologize to you for the word used by Messire John de Stogumber. It does not mean in England what it does in France. In your language traitor means betrayer, one who is perfidious, treacherous, unfaithful, disloyal. In our country it means simply one who is not wholly devoted to our English interests.

CAUCHON. I am sorry: I did not understand [*He subsides into his chair with dignity*]

WARWICK [*resuming his seat, much relieved*] I must apologize on my own account if I have seemed to take the burning of this poor girl too lightly. When one has seen whole countryside burnt over and over again as mere items in military routine, one has to grow a very thick skin. Otherwise one might go mad at

all events, I should May I venture to assume that your lordship also, having to see so many heretics burned from time to time, is compelled to take—shall I say a professional view of what would otherwise be a very horrible incident?

CAUCHON Yes it is a painful duty, even, as you say, a horrible one But in comparison with the horror of heresy it is less than nothing I am not thinking of this girl's body, which will suffer for a few moments only, and which must in any event die in some more or less painful manner, but of her soul, which may suffer to all eternity

WARWICK Just so, and God grant that her soul may be saved! But the practical problem would seem to be how to save her soul without saving her body For we must face it, my lord if this cult of The Maid goes on, our cause is lost.

THE CHAPLAIN [*his voice broken like that of a man who has been crying*] May I speak, my lord?

WARWICK Really, Messire John, I had rather you did not, unless you can keep your temper

THE CHAPLAIN It is only this I speak under correction, but The Maid is full of deceit she pretends to be devout Her prayers and confessions are endless How can she be accused of heresy when she neglects no observance of a faithful daughter of The Church?

CAUCHON [*flaming up*] A faithful daughter of The Church! The Pope himself at his proudest dare not presume as this woman presumes She acts as if she herself were The Church She brings the message of God to Charles, and The Church must stand aside She will crown him in the cathedral of Rheims she, not The Church! She sends letters to the king of England giving him God's command through her to return to his island on pain of God's vengeance, which she will execute Let me tell you that the writing of such letters was the practice of the accursed Mahomet, the anti-Christ. Has she ever in all her utterances said one word of The Church? Never It is always God and herself

WARWICK. What can you expect? A beggar on horseback! Her head is turned.

CAUCHON Who has turned it? The devil. And for a mighty purpose He is spreading this heresy everywhere The man Hus, burnt only thirteen years ago at Constance,

infected all Bohemia with it A man named WeLceef, himself an anointed priest, spread the pestilence in England, and to your shame you let him die in his bed We have such people here in France too I know the breed. It is cancerous if it be not cut out, stamped out, burnt out, it will not stop until it has brought the whole body of human society into sin and corruption, into waste and ruin By it an Arab camel driver drove Christ and His Church out of Jerusalem, and ravaged his way west like a wild beast until at last there stood only the Pyrenees and God's mercy between France and damnation Yet what did the camel driver do at the beginning more than this shepherd girl is doing? He had his voices from the angel Gabriel she has her voices from St Catherine and St Margaret and the Blessed Michael He declared himself the messenger of God, and wrote in God's name to the kings of the earth Her letters to them are going forth daily It is not the Mother of God now to whom we must look for intercession, but to Joan the Maid What will the world be like when The Church's accumulated wisdom and knowledge and experience, its councils of learned, venerable pious men, are thrust into the kennel by every ignorant laborer or dairymaid whom the devil can puff up with the monstrous self-conceit of being directly inspired from heaven? It will be a world of blood, of fury, of devastation, of each man striving for his own hand in the end a world wrecked back into barbarism For now you have only Mahomet and his dupes, and the Maid and her dupes, but what will it be when every girl thinks herself a Joan and every man a Mahomet? I shudder to the very marrow of my bones when I think of it. I have fought it all my life, and I will fight it to the end Let all this woman's sins be forgiven her except only this sin, for it is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and if she does not recant in the dust before the world, and submit herself to the last inch of her soul to her Church, to the fire she shall go if she once falls into my hand

WARWICK [*unimpressed*] You feel strongly about it, naturally

CAUCHON Do not you?

WARWICK I am a soldier, not a churchman As a pilgrim I saw something of the Mahometans They were not so ill-bred as I had been led to believe In some respects their

conduct compared favorably with ours

CAUCHON [*displeased*] I have noticed this before Men go to the East to convert the infidels And the infidels pervert them The Crusader comes back more than half a Saracen Not to mention that all Englishmen are born heretics

THE CHAPLAIN Englishmen heretics!!! [*Appealing to Warwick*] My lord must we endure this? His lordship is beside himself How can what an Englishman believes be heresy? It is a contradiction in terms

CAUCHON. I absolve you, Messire de Stogumber, on the ground of invincible ignorance The thick air of your country does not breed theologians

WARWICK. You would not say so if you heard us quarrelling about religion, my lord! I am sorry you think I must be either a heretic or a blockhead because, as a travelled man, I know that the followers of Mahomet profess great respect for our Lord, and are more ready to forgive St Peter for being a fisherman than your lordship is to forgive Mahomet for being a camel driver But at least we can proceed in this matter without bigotry

CAUCHON When men call the zeal of the Christian Church bigotry I know what to think

WARWICK They are only east and west views of the same thing

CAUCHON [*bitterly ironical*] Only east and west! Only!

WARWICK Oh, my Lord Bishop, I am not gainsaying you You will carry The Church with you; but you have to carry the nobles also To my mind there is a stronger case against The Maid than the one you have so forcibly put Frankly, I am not afraid of this girl becoming another Mahomet, and superseding The Church by a great heresy I think you exaggerate that risk. But have you noticed that in these letters of hers, she proposes to all the kings of Europe, as she has already pressed on Charles, a transaction which would wreck the whole social structure of Christendom?

CAUCHON. Wreck The Church I tell you so.

WARWICK [*whose patience is wearing out*] My lord pray get The Church out of your head for a moment; and remember that there are temporal institutions in the world as well as spiritual ones. I and my peers represent the feudal aristocracy as you represent The

Church We are the temporal power Well, do you not see how this girl's idea strikes at us?

CAUCHON How does her idea strike at you, except as it strikes at all of us, through The Church?

WARWICK Her idea is that the kings should give their realms to God, and then reign as God's bailiffs

CAUCHON [*not interested*] Quite sound theologically, my lord But the king will hardly care, provided he reign It is an abstract idea a mere form of words

WARWICK By no means It is a cunning device to supersede the aristocracy, and make the king sole and absolute autocrat. Instead of the king being merely the first among his peers, he becomes their master That we cannot suffer we call no man master Nominally we hold our lands and dignities from the king, because there must be a keystone to the arch of human society, but we hold our lands in our own hands, and defend them with our own swords and those of our own tenants Now by The Maid's doctrine the king will take our lands—our lands!—and make them a present to God; and God will then vest them wholly in the king.

CAUCHON Need you fear that? You are the makers of kings after all York or Lancaster in England, Lancaster or Valois in France. they reign according to your pleasure.

WARWICK. Yes, but only as long as the people follow their feudal lords, and know the king only as a travelling show, owning nothing but the highway that belongs to everybody If the people's thoughts and hearts were turned to the king, and their lords became only the king's servants in their eyes, the king could break us across his knee one by one; and then what should we be but liveried courtiers in his halls?

CAUCHON. Still you need not fear, my lord Some men are born kings, and some are born statesmen The two are seldom the same Where would the king find counsellors to plan and carry out such a policy for him?

WARWICK [*with a not too friendly smile*] Perhaps in the Church, my lord.

Cauchon, with an equally sour smile, shrugs his shoulders, and does not contradict him

WARWICK. Strike down the barons; and the cardinals will have it all their own way.

CAUCHON [*conciliatory, dropping his polemical tone*] My lord we shall not defeat The Maid

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

if we strive against one another I know well that there is a Will to Power in the world I know that while it lasts there will be a struggle between the Emperor and the Pope, between the dukes and the political cardinals, between the barons and the kings The devil divides us and governs I see you are no friend to The Church you are an earl first and last, as I am a churchman first and last But can we not sink our differences in the face of a common enemy? I see now that what is in your mind is not that this girl has never once mentioned The Church, and thinks only of God and herself, but that she has never once mentioned the peerage, and thinks only of the king and herself

WARWICK Quite so These two ideas of hers are the same idea at bottom It goes deep, my lord It is the protest of the individual soul against the interference of priest or peer between the private man and his God I should call it Protestantism if I had to find a name for it

CAUCHON [*looking hard at him*] You understand it wonderfully well, my lord Scratch an Englishman, and find a Protestant

WARWICK [*playing the punk of courtesy*] I think you are not entirely void of sympathy with The Maid's secular heresy, my lord I leave you to find a name for it

CAUCHON You mistake me, my lord I have no sympathy with her political presumptions But as a priest I have gained a knowledge of the minds of the common people, and there you will find yet another most dangerous idea I can express it only by such phrases as France for the French, England for the English, Italy for the Italians, Spain for the Spanish, and so forth It is sometimes so narrow and bitter in country folk that it surprises me that this country girl can rise above the idea of her village for its villagers

But she can She does When she threatens to drive the English from the soil of France she is undoubtedly thinking of the whole extent of country in which French is spoken To her the French-speaking people are what the Holy Scriptures describe as a nation Call this side of her heresy Nationalism if you will I can find you no better name for it I can only tell you that it is essentially anti-Catholic and anti-Christian, for the Catholic Church knows only one realm, and that is the realm of Christ's kingdom Divide that kingdom into nations, and you dethrone Christ De-

throne Christ, and who will stand between our throats and the sword? The world will perish in a welter of war

WARWICK Well, if you will burn the Protestant, I will burn the Nationalist, though perhaps I shall not carry Messire John with me there. England for the English will appeal to him

THE CHAPLAIN Certainly England for the English goes without saying it is the simple law of nature But this woman denies to England her legitimate conquests, given her by God because of her peculiar fitness to rule over less civilized races for their own good I do not understand what your lordships mean by Protestant and Nationalist you are too learned and subtle for a poor clerk like myself But I know as a matter of plain commonsense that the woman is a rebel, and that is enough for me She rebels against Nature by wearing man's clothes, and fighting She rebels against The Church by usurping the divine authority of the Pope She rebels against God by her damnable league with Satan and his evil spirits against our army And all these rebellions are only excuses for her great rebellion against England That is not to be endured Let her perish Let her burn Let her not infect the whole flock It is expedient that one woman die for the people

WARWICK [*rising*] My lord we seem to be agreed

CAUCHON [*rising also, but in protest*] I will not imperil my soul I will uphold the justice of the Church I will strive to the utmost for this woman's salvation

WARWICK I am sorry for the poor girl I hate these severities I will spare her if I can

THE CHAPLAIN [*implacably*] I would burn her with my own hands

CAUCHON [*blessing him*] Sancta simplicitas!

SCENE V

The ambulatory in the cathedral of Rheims, near the door of the vestry A pillar bears one of the stations of the cross The organ is playing the people out of the nave after the coronation Joan is kneeling in prayer before the station She is beautifully dressed, but still in male attire The organ ceases as Dunois, also splendidly arrayed, comes into the ambulatory from the vestry

DUNOIS Come, Joan! you have had enough

praying After that fit of crying you will catch a chill if you stay here any longer It is all over the cathedral is empty, and the streets are full They are calling for The Maid We have told them you are staying here alone to pray, but they want to see you again

JOAN No let the king have all the glory

DUNOIS He only spoils the show, poor devil No, Joan you have crowned him; and you must go through with it

JOAN [*shakes her head reluctantly*]

DUNOIS [*raising her*] Come come! it will be over in a couple of hours It's better than the bridge at Orleans eh?

JOAN Oh, dear Dunois, how I wish it were the bridge at Orleans again! We lived at that bridge

DUNOIS Yes, faith, and died too some of us

JOAN Isn't it strange, Jack? I am such a coward I am frightened beyond words before a battle, but it is so dull afterwards when there is no danger oh, so dull! dull! dull!

DUNOIS You must learn to be abstemious in war, just as you are in your food and drink, my little saint

JOAN Dear Jack I think you like me as a soldier likes his comrade

DUNOIS You need it, poor innocent child of God You have not many friends at court

JOAN Why do all these courtiers and knights and churchmen hate me? What have I done to them? I have asked nothing for myself except that my village shall not be taxed, for we cannot afford war taxes I have brought them luck and victory I have set them right when they were doing all sorts of stupid things I have crowned Charles and made him a real king, and all the honors he is handing out have gone to them. Then why do they not love me?

DUNOIS [*rallying her*] Sim-ple-ton! Do you expect stupid people to love you for shewing them up? Do blundering old military dug-outs love the successful young captains who supersede them? Do ambitious politicians love the climbers who take the front seats from them? Do archbishops enjoy being played off their own altars, even by saints? Why, I should be jealous of you myself if I were ambitious enough

JOAN You are the pick of the basket here, Jack the only friend I have among all these nobles. I'll wager your mother was from the country I will go back to the farm when I have taken Paris.

DUNOIS I am not so sure that they will let you take Paris

JOAN [*startled*] What!

DUNOIS I should have taken it myself before this if they had all been sound about it Some of them would rather Paris took you, I think So take care

JOAN Jack the world is too wicked for me If the goddams and the Burgundians do not make an end of me, the French will Only for my voices I should lose all heart. That is why I had to steal away to pray here alone after the coronation I'll tell you something, Jack. It is in the bells I hear my voices Not today, when they all rang that was nothing but jangling But here in this corner, where the bells come down from heaven, and the echoes linger, or in the fields, where they come from a distance through the quiet of the countryside, my voices are in them [*The cathedral clock chimes the quarter*] Hark! [*She becomes rapt*] Do you hear? "Dear-child-of-God": just what you said. At the half-hour they will say "Be-brave-go-on" At the three-quarters they will say "I-am-thy-Help" But it is at the hour, when the great bell goes after "God-will-save-France". it is then that St Margaret and St Catherine and sometimes even the blessed Michael will say things that I cannot tell beforehand Then, oh then—

DUNOIS [*interrupting her kindly but not sympathetically*] Then, Joan, we shall hear whatever we fancy in the booming of the bell You make me uneasy when you talk about your voices I should think you were a bit cracked if I hadn't noticed that you give me very sensible reasons for what you do, though I hear you telling others you are only obeying Madame Saint Catherine.

JOAN [*crossly*] Well, I have to find reasons for you, because you do not believe in my voices But the voices come first; and I find the reasons after whatever you may choose to believe.

DUNOIS Are you angry, Joan?

JOAN Yes [*Smiling*] No. not with you I wish you were one of the village babies.

DUNOIS Why?

JOAN I could nurse you for awhile

DUNOIS You are a bit of a woman after all.

JOAN No not a bit I am a soldier and nothing else Soldiers always nurse children when they get a chance

DUNOIS That is true [*He laughs*]

King Charles, with Bluebeard on his left and

La Hire on his right, comes from the vestry, where he has been disrobing Joan shrinks away behind the pillar Dunois is left between Charles and La Hire

DUNOIS Well, your Majesty is an anointed king at last How do you like it?

CHARLES I would not go through it again to be empeior of the sun and moon The weight of those robes! I thought I should have dropped when they loaded that crown on to me And the famous holy oil they talked so much about was rancid phew! The Archbishop must be nearly dead his robes must have weighed a ton they are stripping him still in the vestry

DUNOIS [*drily*] Your Majesty should wear armor oftener That would accustom you to heavy dressing

CHARLES Yes the old jibe! Well, I am not going to wear armor fighting is not my job Where is The Maid?

JOAN [*coming forward between Charles and Bluebeard, and falling on her knee*] Sire I have made you king my work is done I am going back to my father's farm

CHARLES [*surprised, but relieved*] Oh, are you? Well, that will be very nice

Joan rises, deeply discouraged

CHARLES [*continuing heedlessly*] A healthy life, you know

DUNOIS But a dull one

BLUEBEARD You will find the petticoats tripping you up after leaving them off for so long

LA HIRE You will miss the fighting It's a bad habit, but a grand one, and the hardest of all to break yourself of

CHARLES [*anxiously*] Still, we dont want you to stay if you would really rather go home

JOAN [*bitterly*] I know well that none of you will be sorry to see me go [*She turns her shoulder to Charles and walks past him to the more congenial neighborhood of Dunois and La Hire*]

LA HIRE Well, I shall be able to swear when I want to But I shall miss you at times

JOAN La Hire in spite of all your suns and swears we shall meet in heaven, for I love you as I love Pitou, my old sheep dog Pitou could kill a wolf You will kill the English wolves until they go back to their country and become good dogs of God, will you not?

LA HIRE You and I together yes

JOAN No I shall last only a year from the

beginning

ALL THE OTHERS What!

JOAN I know it somehow

DUNOIS Nonsense!

JOAN Jack do you think you will be able to drive them out?

DUNOIS [*with quiet conviction*] Yes I shall drive them out They beat us because we thought battles were tournaments and ransom markets We played the fool while the goddams took war seriously But I have learnt my lesson, and taken their measure They have no roots here I have beaten them before, and I shall beat them again

JOAN You will not be cruel to them, Jack?

DUNOIS The goddams will not yield to tender handling We did not begin it

JOAN [*suddenly*] Jack before I go home, let us take Paris

CHARLES [*terrified*] Oh no no We shall lose everything we have gained. Oh dont let us have any more fighting We can make a very good treaty with the Duke of Burgundy

JOAN Treaty! [*She stamps with impatience*]

CHARLES Well, why not, now that I am crowned and anointed? Oh, that oil!

The Archbishop comes from the vestry, and joins the group between Charles and Bluebeard

CHARLES Archbishop The Maid wants to start fighting again

THE ARCHBISHOP Have we ceased fighting, then? Are we at peace?

CHARLES No I suppose not; but let us be content with what we have done Let us make a treaty Our luck is too good to last, and now is our chance to stop before it turns

JOAN Luck! God has fought for us, and you call it luck! And you would stop while there are still Englishmen on this holy earth of dear France!

THE ARCHBISHOP [*sternly*] Maid the king addressed himself to me, not to you You forget yourself You very often forget yourself

JOAN [*unabashed, and rather roughly*] Then speak, you, and tell him that it is not God's will that he should take his hand from the plough

THE ARCHBISHOP If I am not so glib with the name of God as you are, it is because I interpret His will with the authority of the Church and of my sacred office When you first came you respected it, and would not have dared to speak as you are now speaking You came clothed with the virtue of humility,

and because God blessed your enterprises accordingly, you have stained yourself with the sin of pride. The old Greek tragedy is rising among us. It is the chastisement of hubris.

CHARLES Yes, she thinks she knows better than everyone else.

JOAN [*distressed, but naïvely incapable of seeing the effect she is producing*] But I do know better than any of you seem to. And I am not proud. I never speak unless I know I am right.

BLUEBEARD } [*exclaiming*] { Ha ha!

CHARLES } [*together*] { Just so

THE ARCHBISHOP How do you know you are right?

JOAN I always know. My voices—

CHARLES Oh, your voices, your voices. Why don't the voices come to me? I am king, not you.

JOAN They do come to you, but you do not hear them. You have not sat in the field in the evening listening for them. When the angelus rings you cross yourself and have done with it, but if you prayed from your heart, and listened to the thrilling of the bells in the air after they stop ringing, you would hear the voices as well as I do. [*Turning brusquely from him*] But what voices do you need to tell you what the blacksmith can tell you that you must strike while the iron is hot? I tell you we must make a dash at Compiègne and relieve it as we relieved Orleans. Then Paris will open its gates, or if not, we will break through them. What is your crown worth without your capital?

LA HIRE That is what I say too. We shall go through them like a red hot shot through a pound of butter. What do you say, Bastard?

DUNOIS If our cannon balls were all as hot as your head, and we had enough of them, we should conquer the earth, no doubt. Pluck and impetuosity are good servants in war, but bad masters. They have delivered us into the hands of the English every time we have trusted to them. We never know when we are beaten—that is our great fault.

JOAN You never know when you are victorious—that is a worse fault. I shall have to make you carry looking-glasses in battle to convince you that the English have not cut off all your noses. You would have been besieged in Orleans still, you and your councils of war, if I had not made you attack. You should always attack, and if you only

hold on long enough the enemy will stop first. You don't know how to begin a battle, and you don't know how to use your cannons. And I do.

She squats down on the flags with crossed ankles, pouting.

DUNOIS. I know what you think of us, General Joan.

JOAN. Never mind that, Jack. Tell them what you think of me.

DUNOIS. I think that God was on your side, for I have not forgotten how the wind changed, and how our hearts changed when you came, and by my faith I shall never deny that it was in your sign that we conquered. But I tell you as a soldier that God is no man's daily drudge, and no maid's either. If you are worthy of it He will sometimes snatch you out of the jaws of death and set you on your feet again, but that is all—once on your feet you must fight with all your might and all your craft. For He has to be fair to your enemy too. Don't forget that. Well, He set us on our feet through you at Orleans, and the glory of it has carried us through a few good battles here to the coronation. But if we presume on it further, and trust to God to do the work we should do ourselves, we shall be defeated, and serve us right!

JOAN But—

DUNOIS. Sh! I have not finished. Do not think, any of you, that these victories of ours were won without generalship. King Charles you have said no word in your proclamations of my part in this campaign, and I make no complaint of that, for the people will run after The Maid and her miracles and not after the Bastard's hard work finding troops for her and feeding them. But I know exactly how much God did for us through The Maid, and how much He left me to do by my own wits; and I tell you that your little hour of miracles is over, and that from this time on he who plays the war game best will win—if the luck is on his side.

JOAN. Ah! if, if, if, if! If ifs and ans were pots and pans there'd be no need of tinkers. [*Rising impetuously*] I tell you, Bastard, your art of war is no use, because your knights are no good for real fighting. War is only a game to them, like tennis and all their other games. They make rules as to what is fair and what is not fair, and heap armor on themselves and on their poor horses to keep out the arrows, and when they fall they can't

get up, and have to wait for their squires to come and lift them to arrange about the ransom with the man that has poked them off their horse. Can't you see that all the like of that is gone by and done with? What use is armor against gunpowder? And if it was, do you think men that are fighting for France and for God will stop to bargain about ransoms, as half your knights live by doing? No, they will fight to win, and they will give up their lives out of their own hand into the hand of God when they go into battle, as I do. Common folks understand this. They cannot afford armor and cannot pay ransoms, but they follow me half naked into the moat and up the ladder and over the wall. With them it is my life or thine, and God defend the right! You may shake your head, Jack, and Bluebeard may twirl his billygoat's beard and cock his nose at me, but remember the day your knights and captains refused to follow me to attack the English at Orleans! You locked the gates to keep me in, and it was the townsfolk and the common people that followed me, and forced the gate, and shewed you the way to fight in earnest.

BLUEBEARD [*offended*] Not content with being Pope Joan, you must be Caesar and Alexander as well.

THE ARCHBISHOP Pride will have a fall, Joan.

JOAN Oh, never mind whether it is pride or not. Is it true? Is it commonsense?

LA HIRE It is true. Half of us are afraid of having our handsome noses broken, and the other half are out for paying off their mortgages. Let her have her way, Dunois. She does not know everything, but she has got hold of the right end of the stick. Fighting is not what it was, and those who know least about it often make the best job of it.

DUNOIS I know all that. I do not fight in the old way. I have learnt the lesson of Agincourt, of Poitiers and Crecy. I know how many lives any move of mine will cost, and if the move is worth the cost I make it and pay the cost. But Joan never counts the cost at all. She goes ahead and trusts to God. She thinks she has God in her pocket. Up to now she has had the numbers on her side, and she has won. But I know Joan, and I see that some day she will go ahead when she has only ten men to do the work of a hundred. And then she will find that God is on the side of the big battalions. She will be taken

by the enemy. And the lucky man that makes the capture will receive sixteen thousand pounds from the Earl of Oureek.

JOAN [*flattered*] Sixteen thousand pounds! Eh, laddie, have they offered that for me? There cannot be so much money in the world.

DUNOIS There is, in England. And now tell me, all of you, which of you will lift a finger to save Joan once the English have got her? I speak first, for the army. The day after she has been dragged from her horse by a god-dam or a Burgundian, and he is not struck dead. The day after she is locked in a dungeon, and the bars and bolts do not fly open at the touch of St Peter's angel. The day when the enemy finds out that she is as vulnerable as I am and not a bit more invincible, she will not be worth the life of a single soldier to us, and I will not risk that life, much as I cherish her as a companion-in-arms.

JOAN I don't blame you, Jack. You are right. I am not worth one soldier's life if God lets me be beaten, but France may think me worth my ransom after what God has done for her through me.

CHARLES I tell you I have no money, and this coronation, which is all your fault, has cost me the last farthing I can borrow.

JOAN The Church is richer than you. I put my trust in the Church.

THE ARCHBISHOP Woman, they will drag you through the streets, and burn you as a witch.

JOAN [*running to him*] Oh, my lord, do not say that. It is impossible. I am a witch!

THE ARCHBISHOP Peter Cauchon knows his business. The University of Paris has burnt a woman for saying that what you have done was well done, and according to God.

JOAN [*bewildered*] But why? What sense is there in it? What I have done is according to God. They could not burn a woman for speaking the truth.

THE ARCHBISHOP They did.

JOAN But you know that she was speaking the truth. You would not let them burn me.

THE ARCHBISHOP How could I prevent them?

JOAN You would speak in the name of the Church. You are a great prince of the Church. I would go anywhere with your blessing to protect me.

THE ARCHBISHOP I have no blessing for you while you are proud and disobedient.

JOAN Oh, why will you go on saying things like that? I am not proud and disobedient. I

am a poor girl, and so ignorant that I do not know A from B How could I be proud? And how can you say that I am disobedient when I always obey my voices, because they come from God.

THE ARCHBISHOP The voice of God on earth is the voice of the Church Militant; and all the voices that come to you are the echoes of your own wilfulness

JOAN It is not true

THE ARCHBISHOP [*flushing angrily*] You tell the Archbishop in his cathedral that he lies, and yet you say you are not proud and disobedient

JOAN. I never said you lied It was you that as good as said my voices lied When have they ever lied? If you will not believe in them even if they are only the echoes of my own commonsense, are they not always right? and are not your earthly counsels always wrong?

THE ARCHBISHOP [*indignantly*] It is waste of time admonishing you

CHARLES. It always comes back to the same thing She is right; and everyone else is wrong.

THE ARCHBISHOP Take this as your last warning If you perish through setting your private judgment above the instructions of your spiritual directors, the Church disowns you, and leaves you to whatever fate your presumption may bring upon you The Bastard has told you that if you persist in setting up your military conceit above the counsels of your commanders—

DUNOIS [*interposing*] To put it quite exactly, if you attempt to relieve the garrison in Compiègne without the same superiority in numbers you had at Orleans—

THE ARCHBISHOP. The army will disown you, and will not rescue you And His Majesty the King has told you that the throne has not the means of ransoming you

CHARLES Not a penny

THE ARCHBISHOP You stand alone absolutely alone, trusting to your own conceit, your own ignorance, your own headstrong presumption, your own impiety in hiding all these sins under the cloak of a trust in God When you pass through these doors into the sunlight, the crowd will cheer you. They will bring you their little children and their invalids to heal. they will kiss your hands and feet, and do what they can, poor simple souls, to turn your head, and madden you with the

self-confidence that is leading you to your destruction But you will be none the less alone they cannot save you We and we only can stand between you and the stake at which our enemies have burnt that wretched woman in Paris.

JOAN [*her eyes shynward*] I have better friends and better counsel than yours

THE ARCHBISHOP. I see that I am speaking in vain to a hardened heart You reject our protection, and are determined to turn us all against you. In future, then, fend for yourself; and if you fail, God have mercy on your soul

DUNOIS That is the truth, Joan Heed it

JOAN Where would you all have been now if I had heeded that sort of truth? There is no help, no counsel, in any of you. Yes. I am alone on earth I have always been alone My father told my brothers to drown me if I would not stay to mind his sheep while France was bleeding to death France might perish if only our lambs were safe I thought France would have friends at the court of the king of France; and I find only wolves fighting for pieces of her poortorn body I thought God would have friends everywhere, because He is the friend of everyone; and in my innocence I believed that you who now cast me out would be like strong towers to keep harm from me But I am wiser now; and nobody is any the worse for being wiser Do not think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone France is alone; and God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength—what would He be if He listened to your jealous little counsels? Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too. it is better to be alone with God. His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love In His strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die I will go out now to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate in yours. You will all be glad to see me burnt; but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever And so, God be with me!

She goes from them They stare after her in glum silence for a moment. Then Gilles de Rais twirls his beard

BLUEBEARD You know, the woman is quite impossible I dont dislike her, really; but what are you to do with such a character?

DUVOIS As God is my judge, if she fell into the Loire I would jump in in full armor to fish her out But if she plays the fool at Compiègne, and gets caught, I must leave her to her doom

LA HIRE Then you had better chain me up, for I could follow her to hell when the spirit rises in her like that

THE ARCHBISHOP She disturbs my judgment too there is a dangerous power in her outbursts. But the pit is open at her feet, and for good or evil we cannot turn her from it

CHARLES If only she would keep quiet, or go home!

They follow her dispiritedly

SCENE VI

Rouen, 30th May 1431 A great stone hall in the castle, arranged for a trial-at-law, but not a trial-by-jury, the court being the Bishop's court with the Inquisition participating hence there are two raised chairs side by side for the Bishop and the Inquisitor as judges Rows of chairs radiating from them at an obtuse angle are for the canons, the doctors of law and theology, and the Dominican monks, who act as assessors In the angle is a table for the scribes, with stools There is also a heavy rough wooden stool for the prisoner All these are at the inner end of the hall The further end is open to the courtyard through a row of arches The court is shielded from the weather by screens and curtains

Looking down the great hall from the middle of the inner end, the judicial chairs and scribes' table are to the right The prisoner's stool is to the left There are arched doors right and left It is a fine sunshiny May morning

Warwick comes in through the arched doorway on the judges' side, followed by his page

THE PAGE [*pertly*] I suppose your lordship is aware that we have no business here This is an ecclesiastical court, and we are only the secular arm

WARWICK I am aware of that fact Will it please your impudence to find the Bishop of Beauvais for me, and give him a hint that he can have a word with me here before the trial, if he wishes?

THE PAGE [*going*] Yes, my lord

WARWICK And mind you behave yourself Do not address him as Pious Peter

THE PAGE No, my lord I shall be kind to him, because, when The Maid is brought in, Pious Peter will have to pick a peck of

pickled pepper

Cauchon enters through the same door with a Dominican monk and a canon, the latter carrying a brief

THE PAGE The Right Reverend his lordship the Bishop of Beauvais And two other reverend gentlemen

WARWICK Get out; and see that we are not interrupted

THE PAGE Right, my lord [*he vanishes airily*]

CAUCHON I wish your lordship good-morrow

WARWICK Good-morrow to your lordship Have I had the pleasure of meeting your friends before? I think not

CAUCHON [*introducing the monk, who is on his right*] This, my lord, is Brother John Lemaître, of the order of St Dominic He is acting as deputy for the Chief Inquisitor into the evil of heresy in France Brother John the Earl of Warwick

WARWICK Your Reverence is most welcome We have no Inquisitor in England, unfortunately, though we miss him greatly, especially on occasions like the present

The Inquisitor smiles patiently, and bows He is a mild elderly gentleman, but has evident reserves of authority and firmness

CAUCHON [*introducing the Canon, who is on his left*] This gentleman is Canon John D'Estivet, of the Chapter of Bayeux He is acting as Promoter

WARWICK Promoter?

CAUCHON Prosecutor, you would call him in civil law

WARWICK Ah! prosecutor Quite, quite I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Canon D'Estivet.

D'Estivet bows [He is on the young side of middle age, well mannered, but vulpine beneath his veneer]

WARWICK May I ask what stage the proceedings have reached? It is now more than nine months since The Maid was captured at Compiègne by the Burgundians It is fully four months since I bought her from the Burgundians for a very handsome sum, solely that she might be brought to justice It is very nearly three months since I delivered her up to you, my Lord Bishop, as a person suspected of heresy May I suggest that you are taking a rather unconscionable time to make up your minds about a very plain case? Is this trial never going to end?

THE INQUISITOR [*smiling*] It has not yet begun, my lord

WARWICK Not yet begun! Why, you have been at it eleven weeks!

CAUCHON We have not been idle, my lord. We have held fifteen examinations of The Maid: six public and nine private.

THE INQUISITOR [*always patiently smiling*] You see, my lord, I have been present at only two of these examinations. They were proceedings of the Bishop's court solely, and not of the Holy Office. I have only just decided to associate myself—that is, to associate the Holy Inquisition—with the Bishop's court. I did not at first think that this was a case of heresy at all. I regarded it as a political case, and The Maid as a prisoner of war. But having now been present at two of the examinations, I must admit that this seems to be one of the gravest cases of heresy within my experience. Therefore everything is now in order; and we proceed to trial this morning [*He moves towards the judicial chairs*].

CAUCHON This moment, if your lordship's convenience allows.

WARWICK [*graciously*] Well, that is good news, gentlemen. I will not attempt to conceal from you that our patience was becoming strained.

CAUCHON. So I gathered from the threats of your soldiers to drown those of our people who favor The Maid.

WARWICK Dear me! At all events their intentions were friendly to you, my lord.

CAUCHON [*sternly*] I hope not. I am determined that the woman shall have a fair hearing. The justice of the Church is not a mockery, my lord.

THE INQUISITOR [*returning*] Never has there been a fairer examination within my experience, my lord. The Maid needs no lawyers to take her part: she will be tried by her most faithful friends, all ardently desirous to save her soul from perdition.

D'ESTIVET Sir, I am the Promoter, and it has been my painful duty to present the case against the girl, but believe me, I would throw up my case today and hasten to her defence if I did not know that men far my superiors in learning and piety, in eloquence and persuasiveness, have been sent to reason with her, to explain to her the danger she is running, and the ease with which she may avoid it [*Suddenly bursting into forensic eloquence, to the disgust of Cauchon and the Inquisitor, who have listened to him so far with patronizing approval*]. Men have dared to say

that we are acting from hate, but God is our witness that they lie. Have we tortured her? No. Have we ceased to exhort her, to implore her to have pity on herself, to come to the bosom of her Church as an erring but beloved child? Have we—

CAUCHON [*interrupting drily*] Take care, Canon. All that you say is true, but if you make his lordship believe it I will not answer for your life, and hardly for my own.

WARWICK [*deprecating, but by no means denying*] Oh, my lord, you are very hard on us poor English. But we certainly do not share your pious desire to save The Maid: in fact I tell you now plainly that her death is a political necessity which I regret but cannot help. If the Church lets her go—

CAUCHON [*with fierce and menacing pride*] If the Church lets her go, woe to the man, were he the Emperor himself, who dares lay a finger on her! The Church is not subject to political necessity, my lord.

THE INQUISITOR [*interposing smoothly*] You need have no anxiety about the result, my lord. You have an invincible ally in the matter: one who is far more determined than you that she shall burn.

WARWICK And who is this very convenient partisan, may I ask?

THE INQUISITOR The Maid herself. Unless you put a gag in her mouth you cannot prevent her from convicting herself ten times over every time she opens it.

D'ESTIVET That is perfectly true, my lord. My hair bristles on my head when I hear so young a creature utter such blasphemies.

WARWICK Well, by all means do your best for her if you are quite sure it will be of no avail [*Looking hard at Cauchon*]. I should be sorry to have to act without the blessing of the Church.

CAUCHON [*with a mixture of cynical admiration and contempt*] And yet they say Englishmen are hypocrites! You play for your side, my lord, even at the peril of your soul. I cannot but admire such devotion, but I dare not go so far myself. I fear damnation.

WARWICK If we feared anything we could never govern England, my lord. Shall I send your people in to you?

CAUCHON Yes, it will be very good of your lordship to withdraw and allow the court to assemble.

Warwick turns on his heel, and goes out through the courtyard. Cauchon takes one of the

judicial seats, and D'Estivet sits at the scribes' table, studying his brief

CAUCHON [*casually, as he makes himself comfortable*] What scoundrels these English nobles are!

THE INQUISITOR [*taking the other judicial chair on Cauchon's left*] All secular power makes men scoundrels. They are not trained for the work, and they have not the Apostolic Succession. Our own nobles are just as bad.

The Bishop's assessors hurry into the hall, headed by Chaplain de Stogumber and Canon de Courcelles, a young priest of 30. The scribes sit at the table, leaving a chair vacant opposite D'Estivet. Some of the assessors take their seats; others stand chatting, waiting for the proceedings to begin formally. De Stogumber, aggrieved and obstinate, will not take his seat; neither will the Canon, who stands on his right.

CAUCHON Good morning, Master de Stogumber. [*To the Inquisitor*] Chaplain to the Cardinal of England.

THE CHAPLAIN [*correcting him*] Of Winchester, my lord. I have to make a protest, my lord.

CAUCHON You make a great many.

THE CHAPLAIN I am not without support, my lord. Here is Master de Courcelles, Canon of Paris, who associates himself with me in my protest.

CAUCHON Well, what is the matter?

THE CHAPLAIN [*sulkily*] Speak you, Master de Courcelles, since I do not seem to enjoy his lordship's confidence. [*He sits down in dudgeon next to Cauchon, on his right.*]

COURCELLES My lord, we have been at great pains to draw up an indictment of The Maid on sixty-four counts. We are now told that they have been reduced, without consulting us.

THE INQUISITOR Master de Courcelles, I am the culprit. I am overwhelmed with admiration for the zeal displayed in your sixty-four counts, but in accusing a heretic, as in other things, enough is enough. Also you must remember that all the members of the court are not so subtle and profound as you, and that some of your very great learning might appear to them to be very great nonsense. Therefore I have thought it well to have your sixty-four articles cut down to twelve—

COURCELLES [*thunderstruck*] Twelve!!!

THE INQUISITOR Twelve will, believe me, be quite enough for your purpose.

THE CHAPLAIN But some of the most important points have been reduced almost to nothing. For instance, The Maid has actually declared that the blessed saints Margaret and Catherine, and the holy Archangel Michael, spoke to her in French. That is a vital point.

THE INQUISITOR You think, doubtless, that they should have spoken in Latin?

CAUCHON No, he thinks they should have spoken in English.

THE CHAPLAIN Naturally, my lord.

THE INQUISITOR Well, as we are all here agreed, I think, that these voices of The Maid are the voices of evil spirits tempting her to her damnation, it would not be very courteous to you, Master de Stogumber, or to the King of England, to assume that English is the devil's native language. So let it pass. The matter is not wholly omitted from the twelve articles. Pray take your places, gentlemen, and let us proceed to business.

All who have not taken their seats, do so.

THE CHAPLAIN Well, I protest. That is all.

COURCELLES I think it hard that all our work should go for nothing. It is only another example of the diabolical influence which this woman exercises over the court. [*He takes his chair, which is on the Chaplain's right.*]

CAUCHON Do you suggest that I am under diabolical influence?

COURCELLES I suggest nothing, my lord. But it seems to me that there is a conspiracy here to hush up the fact that The Maid stole the Bishop of Senlis's horse.

CAUCHON [*keeping his temper with difficulty*] This is not a police court. Are we to waste our time on such rubbish?

COURCELLES [*rising, shocked*] My lord, do you call the Bishop's horse rubbish?

THE INQUISITOR [*blandly*] Master de Courcelles, The Maid alleges that she paid handsomely for the Bishop's horse, and that if he did not get the money the fault was not hers. As that may be true, the point is one on which The Maid may well be acquitted.

COURCELLES Yes, if it were an ordinary horse. But the Bishop's horse! how can she be acquitted for that? [*He sits down again, bewildered and discouraged.*]

THE INQUISITOR I submit to you, with great respect, that if we persist in trying The Maid on trumpery issues on which we may have to declare her innocent, she may escape us on the great main issue of heresy, on which she

seems so far to insist on her own guilt I will ask you, therefore, to say nothing, when The Maid is brought before us, of these stealings of horses, and dancings round fairy trees with the village children, and prayings at haunted wells, and a dozen other things which you were diligently inquiring into until my arrival There is not a village girl in France against whom you could not prove such things: they all dance round haunted trees, and pray at magic wells Some of them would steal the Pope's horse if they got the chance Heresy, gentlemen, heresy is the charge we have to try The detection and suppression of heresy is my peculiar business. I am here as an inquisitor, not as an ordinary magistrate Stick to the heresy, gentlemen; and leave the other matters alone.

CAUCHON I may say that we have sent to the girl's village to make inquiries about her, and there is practically nothing serious against her

THE CHAPLAIN	{	<i>rising and clamoring together</i>	{	Nothing serious,
COURCELLES				my lord— What! The fairy tree not—

CAUCHON [*out of patience*] Be silent, gentlemen, or speak one at a time

Courcelles collapses into his chair, intimidated

THE CHAPLAIN [*sulkily resuming his seat*] That is what The Maid said to us last Friday.

CAUCHON I wish you had followed her counsel, sir When I say nothing serious; I mean nothing that men of sufficiently large mind to conduct an inquiry like this would consider serious I agree with my colleague the Inquisitor that it is on the count of heresy that we must proceed

LADVENU [*a young but ascetically fine-drawn Dominican who is sitting next Courcelles, on his right*] But is there any great harm in the girl's heresy? Is it not merely her simplicity? Many saints have said as much as Joan.

THE INQUISITOR [*dropping his blandness and speaking very gravely*] Brother Martin if you had seen what I have seen of heresy, you would not think it a light thing even in its most apparently harmless and even lovable and pious origins. Heresy begins with people who are to all appearance better than their neighbours A gentle and pious girl, or a young man who has obeyed the command of our Lord by giving all his riches to the poor, and putting on the garb of poverty, the

life of austerity, and the rule of humility and charity, may be the founder of a heresy that will wreck both Church and Empire if not ruthlessly stamped out in time The records of the holy Inquisition are full of histories we dare not give to the world, because they are beyond the belief of honest men and innocent women, yet they all began with saintly simpletons I have seen this again and again Mark what I say: the woman who quarrels with her clothes, and puts on the dress of a man, is like the man who throws off his fur gown and dresses like John the Baptist they are followed, as surely as the night follows the day, by bands of wild women and men who refuse to wear any clothes at all When maids will neither marry nor take regular vows, and men reject marriage and exalt their lusts into divine inspirations, then, as surely as the summer follows the spring, they begin with polygamy, and end by incest Heresy at first seems innocent and even laudable; but it ends in such a monstrous horror of unnatural wickedness that the most tender-hearted among you, if you saw it at work as I have seen it, would clamor against the mercy of the Church in dealing with it For two hundred years the Holy Office has striven with these diabolical madnesses, and it knows that they begin always by vain and ignorant persons setting up their own judgment against the Church, and taking it upon themselves to be the interpreters of God's will You must not fall into the common error of mistaking these simpletons for liars and hypocrites They believe honestly and sincerely that their diabolical inspiration is divine. Therefore you must be on your guard against your natural compassion You are all, I hope, merciful men. how else could you have devoted your lives to the service of our gentle Savior? You are going to see before you a young girl, pious and chaste; for I must tell you, gentlemen, that the things said of her by our English friends are supported by no evidence, whilst there is abundant testimony that her excesses have been excesses of religion and charity and not of worldliness and wantonness This girl is not one of those whose hard features are the sign of hard hearts, and whose brazen looks and lewd demeanor condemn them before they are accused The devilish pride that has led her into her present peril has left no mark on her countenance Strange as it may seem to you,

it has even left no mark on her character outside those special matters in which she is proud, so that you will see a diabolical pride and a natural humility seated side by side in the selfsame soul. Therefore be on your guard. God forbid that I should tell you to harden your hearts, for her punishment if we condemn her will be so cruel that we should forfeit our own hope of divine mercy were there one grain of malice against her in our hearts. But if you hate cruelty—and if any man here does not hate it I command him on his soul's salvation to quit this holy court—I say, if you hate cruelty, remember that nothing is so cruel in its consequences as the toleration of heresy. Remember also that no court of law can be so cruel as the common people are to those whom they suspect of heresy. The heretic in the hands of the Holy Office is safe from violence, is assured of a fair trial, and cannot suffer death, even when guilty, if repentance follows sin. Innumerable lives of heretics have been saved because the Holy Office has taken them out of the hands of the people, and because the people have yielded them up, knowing that the Holy Office would deal with them. Before the Holy Inquisition existed, and even now when its officers are not within reach, the unfortunate wretch suspected of heresy, perhaps quite ignorantly and unjustly, is stoned, torn in pieces, drowned, burned in his house with all his innocent children, without a trial, unshriven, unburied save as a dog is burned—all of them deeds hateful to God and most cruel to man. Gentlemen, I am compassionate by nature as well as by my profession, and though the work I have to do may seem cruel to those who do not know how much more cruel it would be to leave it undone, I would go to the stake myself sooner than do it if I did not know its righteousness, its necessity, its essential mercy. I ask you to address yourself to this trial in that conviction. Anger is a bad counsellor; cast out anger. Pity is sometimes worse; cast out pity. But do not cast out mercy. Remember only that justice comes first. Have you anything to say, my lord, before we proceed to trial?

CAUCHON You have spoken for me, and spoken better than I could. I do not see how any sane man could disagree with a word that has fallen from you. But thus I will add. The crude heresies of which you have told

us are horrible; but their horror is like that of the black death: they rage for a while and then die out, because sound and sensible men will not under any incitement be reconciled to nakedness and incest and polygamy and the like. But we are confronted today throughout Europe with a heresy that is spreading among men not weak in mind nor diseased in brain: nay, the stronger the mind, the more obstinate the heretic. It is neither discredited by fantastic extremes nor corrupted by the common lusts of the flesh, but it, too, sets up the private judgment of the single erring mortal against the considered wisdom and experience of the Church. The mighty structure of Catholic Christendom will never be shaken by naked madmen or by the sins of Moab and Ammon. But it may be betrayed from within, and brought to barbarous ruin and desolation, by this arch heresy which the English Commander calls Protestantism.

THE ASSESSORS [*whispering*] Protestantism! What was that! What does the Bishop mean? Is it a new heresy? The English Commander, he said. Did you ever hear of Protestantism? etc., etc.

CAUCHON [*continuing*] And that reminds me. What provision has the Earl of Warwick made for the defence of the secular arm should The Maid prove obdurate, and the people be moved to pity her?

THE CHAPLAIN Have no fear on that score, my lord. The noble earl has eight hundred men-at-arms at the gates. She will not slip through our English fingers even if the whole city be on her side.

CAUCHON [*revolted*] Will you not add, God grant that she repent and purge her sin?

THE CHAPLAIN That does not seem to me to be consistent, but of course I agree with your lordship.

CAUCHON [*giving him up with a shrug of contempt*] The court sits.

THE INQUISITOR Let the accused be brought in.

LADY JENNIFER [*calling*] The accused. Let her be brought in.

Joan, chained by the ankles, is brought in through the arched door behind the prisoner's stool by a guard of English soldiers. With them is the Executioner and his assistants. They lead her to the prisoner's stool, and place themselves behind it after taking off her chain. She wears a page's black suit. Her long imprisonment and the strain of the examinations which have pre-

ceded the trial have left their mark on her, but her vitality still holds. she confronts the court unabashed, without a trace of the awe which their formal solemnity seems to require for the complete success of its impressiveness

THE INQUISITOR [*kindly*] Sit down, Joan [*She sits on the prisoner's stool*] You look very pale today Are you not well?

JOAN Thank you kindly. I am well enough But the Bishop sent me some carp, and it made me ill

CAUCHON I am sorry I told them to see that it was fresh

JOAN. You meant to be good to me, I know, but it is a fish that does not agree with me The English thought you were trying to poison me—

CAUCHON } [*together*] { What!
THE CHAPLAIN } { No, my lord.

JOAN [*continuing*] They are determined that I shall be burnt as a witch; and they sent their doctor to cure me; but he was forbidden to bleed me because the silly people believe that a witch's witchery leaves her if she is bled so he only called me filthy names Why do you leave me in the hands of the English? I should be in the hands of the Church And why must I be chained by the feet to a log of wood? Are you afraid I will fly away?

D'ESTIVET [*harshly*] Woman it is not for you to question the court it is for us to question you.

COURCELLES When you were left unchained, did you not try to escape by jumping from a tower sixty feet high? If you cannot fly like a witch, how is it that you are still alive?

JOAN I suppose because the tower was not so high then. It has grown higher every day since you began asking me questions about it

D'ESTIVET. Why did you jump from the tower?

JOAN How do you know that I jumped?

D'ESTIVET You were found lying in the moat Why did you leave the tower?

JOAN Why would anybody leave a prison if they could get out?

D'ESTIVET You tried to escape?

JOAN Of course I did, and not for the first time either. If you leave the door of the cage open the bird will fly out.

D'ESTIVET [*rising*] That is a confession of heresy I call the attention of the court to it

JOAN. Heresy, he calls it! Am I a heretic because I try to escape from prison?

D'ESTIVET. Assuredly, if you are in the hands of the Church, and you wilfully take yourself out of its hands, you are deserting the Church, and that is heresy.

JOAN. It is great nonsense Nobody could be such a fool as to think that

D'ESTIVET You hear, my lord, how I am reviled in the execution of my duty by this woman [*He sits down indignantly*]

CAUCHON I have warned you before, Joan, that you are doing yourself no good by these pert answers

JOAN But you will not talk sense to me I am reasonable if you will be reasonable

THE INQUISITOR [*interposing*] This is not yet in order You forget, Master Promotei, that the proceedings have not been formally opened. The time for questions is after she has sworn on the Gospels to tell us the whole truth.

JOAN You say this to me every time I have said again and again that I will tell you all that concerns this trial But I cannot tell you the whole truth God does not allow the whole truth to be told You do not understand it when I tell it. It is an old saying that he who tells too much truth is sure to be hanged I am weary of this argument we have been over it nine times already I have sworn as much as I will swear; and I will swear no more.

COURCELLES My lord, she should be put to the torture

THE INQUISITOR You hear, Joan? That is what happens to the obdurate. Think before you answer Has she been shewn the instruments?

THE EXECUTIONER They are ready, my lord She has seen them

JOAN If you tear me limb from limb until you separate my soul from my body you will get nothing out of me beyond what I have told you What more is there to tell that you could understand? Besides, I cannot bear to be hurt, and if you hurt me I will say anything you like to stop the pain But I will take it all back afterwards, so what is the use of it?

LADVENU There is much in that We should proceed mercifully.

COURCELLES. But the torture is customary.

THE INQUISITOR It must not be applied wantonly. If the accused will confess voluntarily, then its use cannot be justified

COURCELLES But this is unusual and irregu-

lar She refuses to take the oath

LADVENU [*disgusted*] Do you want to torture the girl for the mere pleasure of it?

COURCELLES [*bewildered*] But it is not a pleasure. It is the law It is customary It is always done

THE INQUISITOR That is not so, Master, except when the inquiries are carried on by people who do not know their legal business

COURCELLES But the woman is a heretic I assure you it is always done

CAUCHON [*decisively*] It will not be done to-day if it is not necessary Let there be an end of this I will not have it said that we proceeded on forced confessions. We have sent our best preachers and doctors to this woman to exhort and implore her to save her soul and body from the fire we shall not now send the executioner to thrust her into it

COURCELLES Your lordship is merciful, of course But it is a great responsibility to depart from the usual practice

JOAN Thou art a rare noodle, Master Do what was done last time is thy rule, eh?

COURCELLES [*rising*] Thou wanton dost thou dare call me noodle?

THE INQUISITOR Patience, Master, patience I fear you will soon be only too terribly avenged.

COURCELLES [*mutters*] Noodle indeed! [*He sits down, much discontented*]

THE INQUISITOR Meanwhile, let us not be moved by the rough side of a shepherd lass's tongue

JOAN Nay I am no shepherd lass, though I have helped with the sheep like anyone else I will do a lady's work in the house—spin or weave—against any woman in Rouen

THE INQUISITOR This is not a time for vanity, Joan. You stand in great peril

JOAN I know it have I not been punished for my vanity? If I had not worn my cloth of gold surcoat in battle like a fool, that Burgundian soldier would never have pulled me backwards off my horse, and I should not have been here

THE CHAPLAIN If you are so clever at woman's work why do you not stay at home and do it?

JOAN There are plenty of other women to do it, but there is nobody to do my work.

CAUCHON Come! we are wasting time on trifles Joan I am going to put a most solemn question to you. Take care how you answer,

for your life and salvation are at stake on it Will you for all you have said and done, be it good or bad, accept the judgment of God's Church on earth? More especially as to the acts and words that are imputed to you in this trial by the Promoter here, will you submit your case to the inspired interpretation of the Church Militant?

JOAN I am a faithful child of the Church I will obey the Church—

CAUCHON [*hopefully leaning forward*] You will?

JOAN —provided it does not command anything impossible

Cauchon sinks back in his chair with a heavy sigh The Inquisitor purses his lips and frowns Ladvenu shakes his head pitifully

D'ESTIVET She imputes to the Church the error and folly of commanding the impossible

JOAN If you command me to declare that all that I have done and said, and all the visions and revelations I have had, were not from God, then that is impossible I will not declare it for anything in the world What God made me do I will never go back on, and what He has commanded or shall command I will not fail to do in spite of any man alive That is what I mean by impossible And in case the Church should bid me do anything contrary to the command I have from God, I will not consent to it, no matter what it may be

THE ASSESSORS [*shocked and indignant*] Oh! The Church contrary to God! What do you say now? Flat heresy This is beyond everything, etc , etc

D'ESTIVET [*throwing down his brief*] My lord do you need anything more than this?

CAUCHON Woman you have said enough to burn ten heretics Will you not be warned? Will you not understand?

THE INQUISITOR If the Church Militant tells you that your revelations and visions are sent by the devil to tempt you to your damnation, will you not believe that the Church is wiser than you?

JOAN I believe that God is wiser than I, and it is His commands that I will do All the things that you call my crimes have come to me by the command of God I say that I have done them by the order of God it is impossible for me to say anything else If any Churchman says the contrary I shall not mind him I shall mind God alone, whose command I always follow

LADVENU [*pleading with her urgently*] You do not know what you are saying, child. Do you want to kill yourself? Listen. Do you not believe that you are subject to the Church of God on earth?

JOAN. Yes When have I ever denied it?

LADVENU Good That means, does it not, that you are subject to our Lord the Pope, to the cardinals, the archbishops, and the bishops for whom his lordship stands here today?

JOAN God must be served first

D'ESTIVET Then your voices command you not to submit yourself to the Church Militant?

JOAN My voices do not tell me to disobey the Church, but God must be served first.

CAUCHON And you, and not the Church, are to be the judge?

JOAN What other judgment can I judge by but my own?

THE ASSESSORS [*scandalized*] Oh! [*They cannot find words*].

CAUCHON Out of your own mouth you have condemned yourself We have striven for your salvation to the verge of sinning ourselves: we have opened the door to you again and again; and you have shut it in our faces and in the face of God Dare you pretend, after what you have said, that you are in a state of grace?

JOAN If I am not, may God bring me to it! if I am, may God keep me in it!

LADVENU That is a very good reply, my lord

COURCELLES. Were you in a state of grace when you stole the Bishop's horse?

CAUCHON [*rising in a fury*] Oh, devil take the Bishop's horse and you too! We are here to try a case of heresy; and no sooner do we come to the root of the matter than we are thrown back by idiots who understand nothing but horses. [*Trembling with rage, he forces himself to sit down*]

THE INQUISITOR. Gentlemen, gentlemen in clinging to these small issues you are The Maid's best advocates I am not surprised that his lordship has lost patience with you What does the Promoter say? Does he press these trumpery matters?

D'ESTIVET I am bound by my office to press everything, but when the woman confesses a heresy that must bring upon her the doom of excommunication, of what consequence is it that she has been guilty also of offences which expose her to minor penances?

I share the impatience of his lordship as to these minor charges Only, with great respect, I must emphasize the gravity of two very horrible and blasphemous crimes which she does not deny. First, she has intercourse with evil spirits, and is therefore a sorceress Second, she wears men's clothes, which is indecent, unnatural, and abominable; and in spite of our most earnest remonstrances and entreaties, she will not change them even to receive the sacrament.

JOAN. Is the blessed St Catherine an evil spirit? Is St Margaret? Is Michael the Archangel?

COURCELLES How do you know that the spirit which appears to you is an archangel? Does he not appear to you as a naked man?

JOAN Do you think God cannot afford clothes for him?

The assessors cannot help smiling, especially as the joke is against Courcelles

LADVENU Well answered, Joan

THE INQUISITOR. It is, in effect, well answered But no evil spirit would be so simple as to appear to a young girl in a guise that would scandalize her when he meant her to take him for a messenger from the Most High? Joan, the Church instructs you that these apparitions are demons seeking your soul's perdition Do you accept the instruction of the Church?

JOAN I accept the messenger of God How could any faithful believer in the Church refuse him?

CAUCHON. Wretched woman, again I ask you, do you know what you are saying?

THE INQUISITOR. You wrestle in vain with the devil for her soul, my lord she will not be saved Now as to this matter of the man's dress For the last time, will you put off that impudent attire, and dress as becomes your sex?

JOAN. I will not.

D'ESTIVET [*pouncing*] The sin of disobedience, my lord

JOAN [*distressed*] But my voices tell me I must dress as a soldier

LADVENU Joan, Joan does not that prove to you that the voices are the voices of evil spirits? Can you suggest to us one good reason why an angel of God should give you such shameless advice?

JOAN. Why, yes what can be plainer commonsense? I was a soldier living among soldiers. I am a prisoner guarded by soldiers

If I were to dress as a woman they would think of me as a woman, and then what would become of me? If I dress as a soldier they think of me as a soldier, and I can live with them as I do at home with my brothers. That is why St Catherine tells me I must not dress as a woman until she gives me leave.

COURCELLES When will she give you leave?

JOAN When you take me out of the hands of the English soldiers. I have told you that I should be in the hands of the Church, and not left night and day with four soldiers of the Earl of Warwick. Do you want me to live with them in petticoats?

LADVENU My lord, what she says is, God knows, very wrong and shocking, but there is a grain of worldly sense in it such as might impose on a simple village maiden.

JOAN If we were as simple in the village as you are in your courts and palaces, there would soon be no wheat to make bread for you.

CAUCHON That is the thanks you get for trying to save her, Brother Martin.

LADVENU Joan, we are all trying to save you. His lordship is trying to save you. The Inquisitor could not be more just to you if you were his own daughter. But you are blinded by a terrible pride and self-sufficiency.

JOAN Why do you say that? I have said nothing wrong. I cannot understand.

THE INQUISITOR The blessed St Athanasius has laid it down in his creed that those who cannot understand are damned. It is not enough to be simple. It is not enough even to be what simple people call good. The simplicity of a darkened mind is no better than the simplicity of a beast.

JOAN There is great wisdom in the simplicity of a beast, let me tell you, and sometimes great foolishness in the wisdom of scholars.

LADVENU We know that, Joan, we are not so foolish as you think us. Try to resist the temptation to make pert replies to us. Do you see that man who stands behind you [*he indicates the Executioner*]?

JOAN [*turning and looking at the man*] Your torturer? But the Bishop said I was not to be tortured.

LADVENU You are not to be tortured because you have confessed everything that is necessary to your condemnation. That man is not only the torturer, he is also the Executioner. Executioner, let The Maid hear your answers to my questions. Are you

prepared for the burning of a heretic this day?

THE EXECUTIONER. Yes, Master.

LADVENU Is the stake ready?

THE EXECUTIONER It is. In the marketplace. The English have built it too high for me to get near her and make the death easier. It will be a cruel death.

JOAN [*horrified*] But you are not going to burn me now?

THE INQUISITOR You realize it at last.

LADVENU There are eight hundred English soldiers waiting to take you to the marketplace the moment the sentence of excommunication has passed the lips of your judges. You are within a few short moments of that doom.

JOAN [*looking round desperately for rescue*] Oh God!

LADVENU Do not despair, Joan. The Church is merciful. You can save yourself.

JOAN [*hopefully*] Yes, my voices promised me I should not be burnt. St Catherine bade me be bold.

CAUCHON Woman, are you quite mad? Do you not yet see that your voices have deceived you?

JOAN Oh no, that is impossible.

CAUCHON Impossible! They have led you straight to your excommunication, and to the stake which is there waiting for you.

LADVENU [*pressing the point hard*] Have they kept a single promise to you since you were taken at Compiègne? The devil has betrayed you. The Church holds out its arms to you.

JOAN [*despairing*] Oh, it is true, it is true. My voices have deceived me. I have been mocked by devils, my faith is broken. I have dared and dared, but only a fool will walk into a fire. God, who gave me my common-sense, cannot will me to do that.

LADVENU Now God be praised that He has saved you at the eleventh hour! [*He hurries to the vacant seat at the scribes' table, and snatches a sheet of paper, on which he sets to work writing eagerly*].

CAUCHON Amen!

JOAN What must I do?

CAUCHON You must sign a solemn recantation of your heresy.

JOAN Sign? That means to write my name. I cannot write.

CAUCHON You have signed many letters before.

JOAN Yes, but someone held my hand and

guided the pen I can make my mark

THE CHAPLAIN [*who has been listening with growing alarm and indignation*] My lord do you mean that you are going to allow this woman to escape us?

THE INQUISITOR. The law must take its course, Master de Stogumber And you know the law

THE CHAPLAIN [*rising, purple with fury*] I know that there is no faith in a Frenchman [*Tumult, which he shouts down*] I know what my lord the Cardinal of Winchester will say when he hears of this I know what the Earl of Warwick will do when he learns that you intend to betray him There are eight hundred men at the gate who will see that this abominable witch is burnt in spite of your teeth.

THE ASSESSORS [*meanwhile*] What is this? What did he say? He accuses us of treachery! This is past bearing No faith in a Frenchman! Did you hear that? This is an intolerable fellow. Who is he? Is this what English Churchmen are like? He must be mad or drunk, etc., etc.

THE INQUISITOR [*rising*] Silence, pray! Gentlemen pray silence! Master Chaplain. bethink you a moment of your holy office of what you are, and where you are I direct you to sit down

THE CHAPLAIN [*folding his arms doggedly, his face working convulsively*] I will NOT sit down

CAUCHON Master Inquisitor this man has called me a traitor to my face before now

THE CHAPLAIN So you are a traitor You are all traitors You have been doing nothing but begging this damnable witch on your knees to recant all through this trial.

THE INQUISITOR [*placidly resuming his seat*] If you will not sit, you must stand: that is all

THE CHAPLAIN I will NOT stand [*he flings himself back into his chair*]

LADVENU [*rising with the paper in his hand*] My lord here is the form of recantation for The Maid to sign

CAUCHON Read it to her

JOAN. Do not trouble. I will sign it

THE INQUISITOR. Woman you must know what you are putting your hand to Read it to her, Brother Martin. And let all be silent

LADVENU [*reading quietly*] "I, Joan, commonly called The Maid, a miserable sinner, do confess that I have most grievously sinned in the following articles. I have pretended

to have revelations from God and the angels and the blessed saints, and perversely rejected the Church's warnings that these were temptations by demons. I have blasphemed abominably by wearing an immodest dress, contrary to the Holy Scripture and the canons of the Church. Also I have clipped my hair in the style of a man, and, against all the duties which have made my sex specially acceptable in heaven, have taken up the sword, even to the shedding of human blood, inciting men to slay each other, invoking evil spirits to delude them, and stubbornly and most blasphemously imputing these sins to Almighty God I confess to the sin of sedition, to the sin of idolatry, to the sin of disobedience, to the sin of pride, and to the sin of heresy. All of which sins I now renounce and abjure and depart from, humbly thanking you Doctors and Masters who have brought me back to the truth and into the grace of our Lord And I will never return to my errors, but will remain in communion with our Holy Church and in obedience to our Holy Father the Pope of Rome All this I swear by God Almighty and the Holy Gospels, in witness whereunto I sign my name to this recantation "

THE INQUISITOR. You understand this, Joan?

JOAN [*listless*] It is plain enough, sir

THE INQUISITOR And it is true?

JOAN It may be true If it were not true, the fire would not be ready for me in the market-place

LADVENU [*taking up his pen and a book, and going to her quickly lest she should compromise herself again*] Come, child let me guide your hand. Take the pen [*She does so, and they begin to write, using the book as a desk*] J E H A N E So Now make your mark by yourself

JOAN [*makes her mark, and gives him back the pen, tormented by the rebellion of her soul against her mind and body*] There!

LADVENU [*replacing the pen on the table, and handing the recantation to Cauchon with a reverence*] Praise be to God, my brothers, the lamb has returned to the flock, and the shepherd rejoices in her more than in ninety and nine just persons [*He returns to his seat*].

THE INQUISITOR [*taking the paper from Cauchon*] We declare thee by this act set free from the danger of excommunication in which thou stoodest. [*He throws the paper*

down to the table]

JOAN I thank you

THE INQUISITOR But because thou hast sinned most presumptuously against God and the Holy Church, and that thou mayst repent thy errors in solitary contemplation, and be shuedled from all temptation to return to them, we, for the good of thy soul, and for a penance that may wipe out thy sins and bring thee finally unspotted to the throne of grace, do condemn thee to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the water of affliction to the end of thy earthly days in perpetual imprisonment

JOAN [*rising in consternation and terrible anger*] Perpetual imprisonment! Am I not then to be set free?

LADVENU [*mildly shocked*] Set free, child, after such wickedness as yours! What are you dreaming of?

JOAN Give me that writing [*She rushes to the table, snatches up the paper, and tears it into fragments*] Light your fire do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole? My voices were right!

LADVENU Joan! Joan!

JOAN Yes they told me you were fools [*the word gives great offence*], and that I was not to listen to your fine words nor trust to your charity You promised me my life, but you lied [*indignant exclamations*] You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead It is not the bread and water I fear I can live on bread when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers, to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills, to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times I could do without my warhorse, I could drag about in a skirt, I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to

me on the wind But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God

THE ASSESSORS [*in great commotion*] Blasphemy! blasphemy! She is possessed She said our counsel was of the devil And hers of God Monstrous! The devil is in our midst, etc, etc

n'ESTIVET [*shouting above the din*] She is a relapsed heretic, obstinate, incorrigible, and altogether unworthy of the mercy we have shewn her I call for her excommunication

THE CHAPLAIN [*to the Executioner*] Light your fire, man To the stake with her

The Executioner and his assistants hurry out through the courtyard

LADVENU You wicked girl if your counsel were of God would He not deliver you?

JOAN His ways are not your ways He wills that I go through the fire to His bosom, for I am His child, and you are not fit that I should live among you That is my last word to you

The soldiers seize her

CAUCHON [*rising*] Not yet

They wait There is a dead silence Cauchon turns to the Inquisitor with an inquiring look The Inquisitor nods affirmatively They rise solemnly, and intone the sentence antiphonally

CAUCHON We decree that thou art a relapsed heretic

THE INQUISITOR Cast out from the unity of the Church.

CAUCHON Sundered from her body

THE INQUISITOR Infected with the leprosy of heresy

CAUCHON A member of Satan

THE INQUISITOR We declare that thou must be excommunicate

CAUCHON And now we do cast thee out, segregate thee, and abandon thee to the secular power

THE INQUISITOR Admonishing the same secular power that it moderate its judgment of thee in respect of death and division of the limbs [*He resumes his seat*]

CAUCHON And if any true sign of penitence appear in thee, to permit our Brother Martin to administer to thee the sacrament of penance

THE CHAPLAIN Into the fire with the witch [*he rushes at her, and helps the soldiers to push*

her out]

Joan is taken away through the courtyard. The assessors rise in disorder, and follow the soldiers, except Ladvenu, who has hidden his face in his hands

CAUCHON [*rising again in the act of sitting down*] No, no this is irregular. The representative of the secular arm should be here to receive her from us

THE INQUISITOR [*also on his feet again*] That man is an incorrigible fool

CAUCHON Brother Martin see that everything is done in order

LADVENU. My place is at her side, my lord. You must exercise your own authority. [*He hurries out*]

CAUCHON These English are impossible they will thrust her straight into the fire. Look!

He points to the courtyard, in which the glow and flicker of fire can now be seen reddening the May daylight. Only the Bishop and the Inquisitor are left in the court

CAUCHON [*turning to go*] We must stop that

THE INQUISITOR [*calmly*] Yes, but not too fast, my lord

CAUCHON [*halting*] But there is not a moment to lose.

THE INQUISITOR We have proceeded in perfect order. If the English choose to put themselves in the wrong, it is not our business to put them in the right. A flaw in the procedure may be useful later on: one never knows. And the sooner it is over, the better for that poor girl.

CAUCHON [*relaxing*] That is true. But I suppose we must see this dreadful thing through

THE INQUISITOR. One gets used to it. Habit is everything. I am accustomed to the fire: it is soon over. But it is a terrible thing to see a young and innocent creature crushed between these mighty forces, the Church and the Law.

CAUCHON You call her innocent!

THE INQUISITOR Oh, quite innocent. What does she know of the Church and the Law? She did not understand a word we were saying. It is the ignorant who suffer. Come, or we shall be late for the end.

CAUCHON [*going with him*] I shall not be sorry if we are. I am not so accustomed as you.

They are going out when Warwick comes in, meeting them

WARWICK. Oh, I am intruding. I thought

it was all over [*He makes a feint of retiring*]

CAUCHON Do not go, my lord. It is all over.

THE INQUISITOR The execution is not in our hands, my lord, but it is desirable that we should witness the end. So by your leave — [*He bows, and goes out through the courtyard*]

CAUCHON There is some doubt whether your people have observed the forms of law, my lord

WARWICK I am told that there is some doubt whether your authority runs in this city, my lord. It is not in your diocese. However, if you will answer for that I will answer for the rest.

CAUCHON It is to God that we both must answer. Good morning, my lord

WARWICK My lord good morning.

They look at one another for a moment with unconcealed hostility. Then Cauchon follows the Inquisitor out. Warwick looks round. Finding himself alone, he calls for attendance.

WARWICK Hallo, some attendance here! [*Silence*]. Hallo, there! [*Silence*]. Hallo! Brian, you young blackguard, where are you? [*Silence*]. Guard! [*Silence*]. They have all gone to see the burning, even that child.

The silence is broken by someone frantically howling and sobbing.

WARWICK What in the devil's name—?

The Chaplain staggers in from the courtyard like a demented creature, his face streaming with tears, making the piteous sounds that Warwick has heard. He stumbles to the prisoner's stool, and throws himself upon it with heartrending sobs.

WARWICK [*going to him and patting him on the shoulder*] What is it, Master John? What is the matter?

THE CHAPLAIN [*clutching at his hands*] My lord, my lord. For Christ's sake pray for my wretched guilty soul.

WARWICK [*soothing him*] Yes, yes of course I will. Calmly, gently—

THE CHAPLAIN [*blubbing miserably*] I am not a bad man, my lord.

WARWICK No, no: not at all.

THE CHAPLAIN I meant no harm. I did not know what it would be like.

WARWICK [*hardening*] Oh! You saw it, then?

THE CHAPLAIN I did not know what I was doing. I am a hotheaded fool, and I shall be damned to all eternity for it.

WARWICK Nonsense! Very distressing, no doubt, but it was not your doing.

THE CHAPLAIN [*lamentably*] I let them do it.

If I had known, I would have torn her from their hands You dont know you havnt seen. it is so easy to talk when you dont know You madden yourself with words. you damn yourself because it feels grand to throw oil on the flaming hell of your own temper But when it is brought home to you, when you see the thing you have done, when it is blinding your eyes, stifling your nostrils, tearing your heart, then — then — [*Falling on his knees*] O God, take away this sight from me! O Christ, deliver me from this fire that is consuming me! She cried to Thee in the midst of it Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! She is in Thy bosom, and I am in hell for evermore

WARWICK [*summarily hauling him to his feet*] Come come, man! you must pull yourself together We shall have the whole town talking of this [*He throws him not too gently into a chair at the table*] If you have not the nerve to see these things, why do you not do as I do, and stay away?

THE CHAPLAIN [*bemltered and submissive*] She asked for a cross A soldier gave her two sticks tied together. Thank God he was an Englishman! I might have done it, but I did not I am a coward, a mad dog, a fool But he was an Englishman too

WARWICK The fool! they will burn him too if the priests get hold of him

THE CHAPLAIN [*shaken with a convulsion*] Some of the people laughed at her They would have laughed at Christ They were French people, my lord I know they were French

WARWICK Hush? someone is coming Control yourself

Ladvenu comes back through the courtyard to Warwick's right hand, carrying a bishop's cross which he has taken from a church He is very grave and composed

WARWICK I am informed that it is all over, Brother Martin

LADVENU [*enigmatically*] We do not know, my lord It may have only just begun

WARWICK What does that mean, exactly?

LADVENU I took this cross from the church for her that she might see it to the last she had only two sticks that she put into her bosom When the fire crept round us, and she saw that if I held the cross before her I should be burnt myself, she warned me to get down and save myself My lord a girl who could think of another's danger in such a moment was not inspired by the devil

When I had to snatch the cross from her sight, she looked up to heaven. And I do not believe that the heavens were empty. I firmly believe that her Savior appeared to her then in His tenderest glory She called to Him and died This is not the end for her, but the beginning

WARWICK I am afraid it will have a bad effect on the people.

LADVENU It had, my lord, on some of them I heard laughter Forgive me for saying that I hope and believe it was English laughter.

THE CHAPLAIN [*rising frantically*] No it was not There was only one Englishman there that disgraced his country, and that was the mad dog, de Stogumber [*He rushes wildly out, shrieking*] Let them torture him Let them burn him I will go pray among her ashes I am no better than Judas I will hang myself

WARWICK Quick, Brother Martin follow him he will do himself some mischief After him, quick

Ladvenu hurries out, Warwick urging him The Executioner comes in by the door behind the judges' chairs, and Warwick, returning, finds himself face to face with him

WARWICK Well, fellow who are you?

THE EXECUTIONER [*with dignity*] I am not addressed as fellow, my lord I am the Master Executioner of Rouen it is a highly skilled mystery I am come to tell your lordship that your orders have been obeyed

WARWICK I crave your pardon, Master Executioner, and I will see that you lose nothing by having no relics to sell I have your word, have I, that nothing remains, not a bone, not a nail, not a hair?

THE EXECUTIONER. Her heart would not burn, my lord, but everything that was left is at the bottom of the river You have heard the last of her

WARWICK [*with a wry smile, thinking of what Ladvenu said*] The last of her? Him! I wonder!

EPILOGUE

A restless fitfully windy night in June 1456, full of summer lightning after many days of heat King Charles the Seventh of France, formerly Joan's Dauphin, now Charles the Victorious, aged 51, is in bed in one of his royal chateaux The bed, raised on a dais of two steps, is towards the side of the room so as to avoid blocking a tall lancet window in the middle

Its canopy bears the royal arms in embroidery Except for the canopy and the huge down pillows there is nothing to distinguish it from a broad settle with bed-clothes and a valance Thus its occupant is in full view from the foot.

Charles is not asleep he is reading in bed, or rather looking at the pictures in Fouquet's Boccaccio with his knees doubled up to make a reading desk Beside the bed on his left is a little table with a picture of the Virgin, lighted by candles of painted wax The walls are hung from ceiling to floor with painted curtains which stir at times in the draughts. At first glance the prevailing yellow and red in these hanging pictures is somewhat flamelike when the folds breathe in the wind.

The door is on Charles's left, but in front of him close to the corner farthest from him A large watchman's rattle, handsomely designed and gaily painted, is in the bed under his hand

Charles turns a leaf. A distant clock strikes the half-hour softly Charles shuts the book with a clap, throws it aside, snatches up the rattle, and whirls it energetically, making a deafening clatter Ladvenu enters, 25 years older, strange and stark in bearing, and still carrying the cross from Rouen. Charles evidently does not expect him, for he springs out of bed on the farther side from the door

CHARLES Who are you? Where is my gentleman of the bedchamber? What do you want?

LADVENU [solemnly] I bring you glad tidings of great joy Rejoice, O king, for the taint is removed from your blood, and the stain from your crown Justice, long delayed, is at last triumphant

CHARLES What are you talking about? Who are you?

LADVENU I am brother Martin

CHARLES And who, saving your reverence, may Brother Martin be?

LADVENU I held this cross when The Maid perished in the fire Twenty-five years have passed since then: nearly ten thousand days And on every one of those days I have prayed God to justify His daughter on earth as she is justified in heaven

CHARLES [reassured, sitting down on the foot of the bed] Oh, I remember now I have heard of you You have a bee in your bonnet about The Maid. Have you been at the inquiry?

LADVENU I have given my testimony.

CHARLES Is it over?

LADVENU It is over

CHARLES Satisfactorily?

LADVENU The ways of God are very strange CHARLES. How so?

LADVENU At the trial which sent a saint to the stake as a heretic and a sorceress, the truth was told, the law was upheld, mercy was shewn beyond all custom, no wrong was done but the final and dreadful wrong of the lying sentence and the pitiless fire At this inquiry from which I have just come, there was shameless perjury, courtly corruption, calumny of the dead who did their duty according to their lights, cowardly evasion of the issue, testimony made of idle tales that could not impose on a ploughboy. Yet out of this insult to justice, this defamation of the Church, this orgy of lying and foolishness, the truth is set in the noonday sun on the hilltop; the white robe of innocence is cleansed from the smirch of the burning faggots; the holy flame is sanctified, the true heart that lived through the flame is consecrated; a great lie is silenced for ever, and a great wrong is set right before all men

CHARLES. My friend. provided they can no longer say that I was crowned by a witch and a heretic, I shall not fuss about how the trick was done Joan would not have fussed about it if it came all right in the end she was not that sort I knew her Is her rehabilitation complete? I made it pretty clear that there was to be no nonsense about it

LADVENU It is solemnly declared that her judges were full of corruption, cozenage, fraud, and malice Four falsehoods

CHARLES. Never mind the falsehoods: her judges are dead

LADVENU The sentence on her is broken, annulled, annihilated, set aside as non-existent, without value or effect

CHARLES Good Nobody can challenge my consecration now, can they?

LADVENU Not Charlemagne nor King David himself was more sacredly crowned.

CHARLES [rising] Excellent Think of what that means to me!

LADVENU I think of what it means to her!

CHARLES You cannot None of us ever knew what anything meant to her She was like nobody else; and she must take care of herself wherever she is, for I cannot take care of her; and neither can you, whatever you may think you are not big enough But I will tell you this about her. If you could bring her back to life, they would burn her

again within six months, for all their present adoration of her And you would hold up the cross, too, just the same So *[crossing himself]* let her rest, and let you and I mind our own business, and not meddle with hers

LADVENU God forbid that I should have no share in her, nor she in me! *[He turns and strides out as he came, saying]* Henceforth my path will not lie through palaces, nor my conversation be with kings

CHARLES *[following him towards the door, and shouting after him]* Much good may it do you, holy man! *[He returns to the middle of the chamber, where he halts, and says quizzically to himself]* That was a funny chap How did he get in? Where are my people? *[He goes impatiently to the bed, and swings the rattle A rush of wind through the open door sets the walls swaying agitatedly The candles go out He calls in the darkness]* Hallo! Someone come and shut the windows everything is being blown all over the place *[A flash of summer lightning shows up the lancet window A figure is seen in silhouette against it]* Who is there? Who is that? Help! Murder! *[Thunder He jumps into bed, and hides under the clothes]*

JOAN'S VOICE Easy, Charhe, easy What art making all that noise for? No one can hear thee Thourt asleep *[She is dimly seen in a pallid greenish light by the bedside]*

CHARLES *[peeping out]* Joan! Are you a ghost, Joan?

JOAN Hardly even that, lad Can a poor burnt-up lass have a ghost? I am but a dream that thourt dreaming *[The light increases they become plainly visible as he sits up]* Thou looks older, lad

CHARLES I am older Am I really asleep?

JOAN Fallen asleep over thy silly book.

CHARLES That's funny

JOAN Not so funny as that I am dead, is it?

CHARLES Are you really dead?

JOAN As dead as anybody ever is, laddie I am out of the body

CHARLES Just fancy! Did it hurt much?

JOAN Did what hurt much?

CHARLES Being burnt

JOAN Oh, that! I cannot remember very well. I think it did at first, but then it all got mixed up, and I was not in my right mind until I was free of the body But do not thou go handling fire and thinking it will not hurt thee How hast been ever since?

CHARLES Oh, not so bad. Do you know, I actually lead my army out and win battles?

Down into the moat up to my waist in mud and blood. Up the ladders with the stones and hot pitch raining down Like you

JOAN No! Did I make a man of thee after all, Charhe?

CHARLES I am Charles the Victorious now I had to be brave because you were Agnes put a little pluck into me too

JOAN Agnes! Who was Agnes?

CHARLES. Agnes Sorel A woman I fell in love with I dream of her often I never dreamed of you before

JOAN Is she dead, like me?

CHARLES. Yes But she was not like you She was very beautiful

JOAN *[laughing heartily]* Ha ha! I was no beauty I was always a rough one a regular soldier I might almost as well have been a man Pity I wasnt I should not have bothered you all so much then But my head was in the skics, and the glory of God was upon me, and, man or woman, I should have bothered you as long as your noses were in the mud Now tell me what has happened since you wise men knew no better than to make a heap of cinders of me?

CHARLES Your mother and brothers have sued the courts to have your case tried over again And the courts have declared that your judges were full of corruption and cozenage, fraud and malice

JOAN Not they They were as honest a lot of poor fools as ever burned their betters

CHARLES The sentence on you is broken, annihilated, annulled null, non-existent, without value or effect

JOAN I was burned, all the same Can they unburn me?

CHARLES If they could, they would think twice before they did it But they have decreed that a beautiful cross be placed where the stake stood, for your perpetual memory and for your salvation

JOAN It is the memory and the salvation that sanctify the cross, not the cross that sanctifies the memory and the salvation. *[She turns away, forgetting him]* I shall outlast that cross I shall be remembered when men will have forgotten where Rouen stood

CHARLES There you go with your self-conceit, the same as ever! I think you might say a word of thanks to me for having had justice done at last

CAUCHON *[appearing at the window between them]* Liar!

CHARLES. Thank you

JOAN Why, if it isn't Peter Cauchon! How are you, Peter? What luck have you had since you burned me?

CAUCHON None I arraign the justice of Man. It is not the justice of God.

JOAN Still dreaming of justice, Peter? See what justice came to with me! But what has happened to thee? Art dead or alive?

CAUCHON Dead Dishonored They pursued me beyond the grave They excommunicated my dead body they dug it up and flung it into the common sewer

JOAN Your dead body did not feel the spade and the sewer as my live body felt the fire

CAUCHON But this thing that they have done against me hurts justice; destroys faith, saps the foundation of the Church The solid earth sways like the treacherous sea beneath the feet of men and spirits alike when the innocent are slain in the name of law, and their wrongs are undone by slandering the pure of heart

JOAN Well, well, Peter, I hope men will be the better for remembering me; and they would not remember me so well if you had not burned me

CAUCHON They will be the worse for remembering me they will see in me evil triumphing over good, falsehood over truth, cruelty over mercy, hell over heaven Their courage will rise as they think of you, only to faint as they think of me Yet God is my witness I was just I was merciful I was faithful to my light. I could do no other than I did

CHARLES [*scrambling out of the sheets and enthroning himself on the side of the bed*] Yes it is always you good men that do the big mischiefs Look at me! I am not Charles the Good, nor Charles the Wise, nor Charles the Bold Joan's worshippers may even call me Charles the Coward because I did not pull her out of the fire But I have done less harm than any of you You people with your heads in the sky spend all your time trying to turn the world upside down, but I take the world as it is, and say that top-side-up is right-side-up, and I keep my nose pretty close to the ground And I ask you, what king of France has done better, or been a better fellow in his little way?

JOAN Art really king of France, Charles? Be the English gone?

DUNOIS [*coming through the tapestry on Joan's*

left, the candles relighting themselves at the same moment, and illuminating his armour and surcoat cheerfully] I have kept my word the English are gone

JOAN Praised be God! now is fair France a province in heaven Tell me all about the fighting, Jack Was it thou that led them? Wert thou God's captain to thy death?

DUNOIS I am not dead My body is very comfortably asleep in my bed at Chateaudun; by my spirit is called here by yours

JOAN And you fought them my way, Jack eh? Not the old way, chaffering for ransoms, but The Maid's way staking life against death, with the heart high and humble and void of malice, and nothing counting under God but France free and French Was it my way, Jack?

DUNOIS. Faith, it was any way that would win But the way that won was always your way I gave you best, lassie I wrote a fine letter to set you right at the new trial Perhaps I should never have let the priests burn you, but I was busy fighting, and it was the Church's business, not mine. There was no use in both of us being burned, was there?

CAUCHON Ay! put the blame on the priests But I, who am beyond praise and blame, tell you that the world is saved neither by its priests nor its soldiers, but by God and His Saints. The Church Militant sent this woman to the fire, but even as she burned, the flames whitened into the radiance of the Church Triumphant

The clock strikes the third quarter A rough male voice is heard troling an improvised tune.



Rum tum trumpledum,
Bacon fat and rumpledum,
Old Saint mumpedum,
Pull his tail and stumpedum
O my Ma—ry Ann!

A ruffianly English soldier comes through the curtains and marches between Dunois and Joan

DUNOIS What villainous troubadour taught you that doggrel?

THE SOLDIER No troubadour We made it up ourselves as we marched We were not gentle-folks and troubadours Music straight out of the heart of the people, as you might say Rum tum trumpledum, Bacon fat and rumpledum, Old Saint mumpedum, Pull his tail and

stumbledum that dont mean anything, you know, but it keeps you marching Your servant, ladies and gentlemen Who asked for a saint?

JOAN Be you a saint?

THE SOLDIER Yes, lady, straight from hell
DUNOIS A saint, and from hell!

THE SOLDIER Yes, noble captain I have a day off Every year, you know Thats my allowance for my one good action

CAUCHON Wretch! In all the years of your life did you do only one good action?

THE SOLDIER I never thought about it it came natural like But they scored it up for me

CHARLES What was it?

THE SOLDIER Why, the silliest thing you ever heard of I—

JOAN [*interrupting him by strolling across to the bed, where she sits beside Charles*] He tied two sticks together, and gave them to a poor lass that was going to be burned.

THE SOLDIER Right Who told you that?

JOAN Never mind Would you know her if you saw her again?

THE SOLDIER Not I There are so many girls! and they all expect you to remember them as if there was only one in the world. This one must have been a prime sort, for I have a day off every year for her, and so, until twelve o'clock punctually, I am a saint, at your service, noble lords and lovely ladies

CHARLES And after twelve?

THE SOLDIER After twelve, back to the only place fit for the likes of me

JOAN [*rising*] Back there! You! that gave the lass the cross!

THE SOLDIER [*excusing his unsoldierly conduct*] Well, she asked for it, and they were going to burn her She had as good a right to a cross as they had, and they had dozens of them It was her funeral, not theirs Where was the harm in it?

JOAN Man I am not reproaching you But I cannot bear to think of you in torment

THE SOLDIER [*cheerfully*] No great torment, lady You see I was used to worse

CHARLES What! worse than hell?

THE SOLDIER Fifteen years' service in the French wars Hell was a treat after that.

Joan throws up her arms, and takes refuge from despair of humanity before the picture of the Virgin

THE SOLDIER [*continuing*]—Suits me somehow The day off was dull at first, like a wet Sunday I dont mind it so much now They

tell me I can have as many as I like as soon as I want them

CHARLES What is hell like?

THE SOLDIER You wont find it so bad, sir. Jolly Like as if you were always drunk without the trouble and expense of drinking Tip top company too emperors and popes and kings and all sorts They chup me about giving that young judy the cross, but I dont care I stand up to them proper, and tell them that if she hadnt a better right to it than they, she'd be where they are That dumbfounds them, that does All they can do is gnash their teeth, hell fashion, and I just laugh and go off singing the old chanty Rum tum trumple—Hullo! Who's that knocking at the door?

They listen A long gentle knocking is heard

CHARLES Come in

The door opens, and an old priest, white-haired, bent, with a silly but benevolent smile, comes in and trots over to Joan

THE NEWCOMER Excuse me, gentle lords and ladies Do not let me disturb you Only a poor old harmless English rector Formerly chaplain to the cardinal to my lord of Winchester John de Stogumber, at your service [*He looks at them inquiringly*] Did you say anything? I am a little deaf, unfortunately Also a little—well, not always in my right mind, perhaps; but still, it is a small village with a few simple people I suffice I suffice they love me there and I am able to do a little good. I am well connected, you see, and they indulge me

JOAN Poor old John! What brought thee to this state?

DE STOGBUMBER I tell my folks they must be very careful I say to them, "If you only saw what you think about you would think quite differently about it. It would give you a great shock. Oh, a great shock" And they all say "Yes, parson we all know you are a kind man, and would not harm a fly" That is a great comfort to me For I am not cruel by nature, you know

THE SOLDIER Who said you were?

DE STOGBUMBER Well, you see, I did a very cruel thing once because I did not know what cruelty was like I had not seen it, you know That is the great thing you must see it And then you are redeemed and saved.

CAUCHON Were not the sufferings of our Lord Christ enough for you?

DE STOGBUMBER No. Oh no not at all. I had

seen them in pictures, and read of them in books, and been greatly moved by them, as I thought. But it was no use: it was not our Lord that redeemed me, but a young woman whom I saw actually burned to death. It was dreadful, oh, most dreadful. But it saved me. I have been a different man ever since, though a little astray in my wits sometimes.

CAUCHON. Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination?

JOAN. Well, if I saved all those he would have been cruel to if he had not been cruel to me, I was not burnt for nothing, was I?

DE STOGUMBER. Oh no, it was not you. My sight is bad. I cannot distinguish your features, but you are not she: oh no, she was burned to a cinder: dead and gone, dead and gone.

THE EXECUTIONER [*stepping from behind the bed curtains on Charles's right, the bed being between them*] She is more alive than you, old man. Her heart would not burn; and it would not drown. I was a master at my craft, better than the master of Paris, better than the master of Toulouse; but I could not kill The Maid. She is up and alive everywhere.

THE EARL OF WARWICK [*sallying from the bed curtains on the other side, and coming to Joan's left hand*] Madam, my congratulations on your rehabilitation. I feel that I owe you an apology.

JOAN. Oh, please don't mention it.

WARWICK [*pleasantly*] The burning was purely political. There was no personal feeling against you, I assure you.

JOAN. I bear no malice, my lord.

WARWICK. Just so. Very kind of you to meet me in that way: a touch of true breeding. But I must insist on apologizing very amply. The truth is, these political necessities sometimes turn out to be political mistakes; and this one was a veritable howler, for your spirit conquered us, madam, in spite of our faggots. History will remember me for your sake, though the incidents of the connection were perhaps a little unfortunate.

JOAN. Ay, perhaps just a little, you funny man.

WARWICK. Still, when they make you a saint, you will owe your halo to me, just as this lucky monarch owes his crown to you.

JOAN [*turning from him*] I shall owe nothing to any man. I owe everything to the spirit of God that was within me. But fancy me a

saint! What would St Catherine and St Margaret say if the farm girl was cocked up beside them!

A clerical-looking gentleman in black frock-coat and trousers, and tall hat, in the fashion of the year 1920, suddenly appears before them in the corner on their right. They all stare at him. Then they burst into uncontrollable laughter.

THE GENTLEMAN. Why this mirth, gentlemen?

WARWICK. I congratulate you on having invented a most extraordinarily comic dress.

THE GENTLEMAN. I do not understand. You are all in fancy dress. I am properly dressed.

DUNOIS. All dress is fancy dress, is it not, except our natural skins?

THE GENTLEMAN. Pardon me. I am here on serious business, and cannot engage in frivolous discussions [*He takes out a paper, and assumes a dry official manner*]. I am sent to announce to you that Joan of Arc, formerly known as The Maid, having been the subject of an inquiry instituted by the Bishop of Orleans—

JOAN [*interrupting*]. Ah! They remember me still in Orleans.

THE GENTLEMAN [*emphatically, to mark his indignation at the interruption*].—by the Bishop of Orleans into the claim of the said Joan of Arc to be canonized as a saint—

JOAN [*again interrupting*]. But I never made any such claim.

THE GENTLEMAN [*as before*].—the Church has examined the claim exhaustively in the usual course, and, having admitted the said Joan successively to the ranks of Venerable and Blessed,—

JOAN [*chuckling*]. Me venerable!

THE GENTLEMAN. —has finally declared her to have been endowed with heroic virtues and favored with private revelations, and calls the said Venerable and Blessed Joan to the communion of the Church Triumphant as Saint Joan.

JOAN [*rapt*]. Saint Joan!

THE GENTLEMAN. On every thirtieth day of May, being the anniversary of the death of the said most blessed daughter of God, there shall in every Catholic church to the end of time be celebrated a special office in commemoration of her; and it shall be lawful to dedicate a special chapel to her, and to place her image on its altar in every such church. And it shall be lawful and laudable for the faithful to kneel and address their

prayers through her to the Mercy Seat

JOAN Oh no It is for the saint to kneel
[*She falls on her knees, still rapt*]

THE GENTLEMAN [*putting up his paper, and retiring beside the Executioner*] In Basilica Vaticana, the sixteenth day of May, nineteen hundred and twenty

DUNOIS [*raising Joan*] Half an hour to burn you, dear Saint, and four centuries to find out the truth about you!

DE STOGUMBER Sir I was chaplain to the Cardinal of Winchester once They always would call him the Cardinal of England It would be a great comfort to me and to my master to see a fair statue to The Maid in Winchester Cathedral Will they put one there, do you think?

THE GENTLEMAN As the building is temporarily in the hands of the Anglican heresy, I cannot answer for that

A vision of the statue in Winchester Cathedral is seen through the window

DE STOGUMBER. Oh look! look! that is Winchester

JOAN Is that meant to be me? I was stiffer on my feet

The vision fades

THE GENTLEMAN I have been requested by the temporal authorities of France to mention that the multiplication of public statues to The Maid threatens to become an obstruction to traffic I do so as a matter of courtesy to the said authorities, but must point out on behalf of the Church that The Maid's horse is no greater obstruction to traffic than any other horse

JOAN Eh! I am glad they have not forgotten my horse

A vision of the statue before Rheims Cathedral appears

JOAN Is that funny little thing me too?

CHARLES That is Rheims Cathedral where you had me crowned It must be you

JOAN Who has broken my sword? My sword was never broken. It is the sword of France

DUNOIS Never mind. Swords can be mended Your soul is unbroken, and you are the soul of France

The vision fades The Archbishop and the Inquisitor are now seen on the right and left of Cauchon

JOAN My sword shall conquer yet the sword that never struck a blow Though men destroyed my body, yet in my soul I have

seen God

CAUCHON [*kneeling to her*] The girls in the field praise thee, for thou hast raised their eyes, and they see that there is nothing between them and heaven

DUNOIS [*kneeling to her*] The dying soldiers praise thee, because thou art a shield of glory between them and the judgment

THE ARCHBISHOP [*kneeling to her*] The princes of the Church praise thee, because thou hast redeemed the faith their worldlinesses have dragged through the mire

WARWICK [*kneeling to her*] The cunning counsellors praise thee, because thou hast cut the knots in which they have tied their own souls

DE STOGUMBER [*kneeling to her*] The foolish old men on their deathbeds praise thee, because their sins against thee are turned into blessings

THE INQUISITOR [*kneeling to her*] The judges in the blindness and bondage of the law praise thee, because thou hast vindicated the vision and the freedom of the living soul

THE SOLDIER [*kneeling to her*] The wicked out of hell praise thee, because thou hast shewn them that the fire that is not quenched is a holy fire

THE EXECUTIONER [*kneeling to her*] The tormentors and executioners praise thee, because thou has shewn that their hands are guiltless of the death of the soul

CHARLES [*kneeling to her*] The unpretending praise thee, because thou hast taken upon thyself the heroic burdens that are too heavy for them

JOAN Woe unto me when all men praise me! I bid you remember that I am a saint, and that saints can work miracles And now tell me shall I rise from the dead, and come back to you a living woman?

A sudden darkness blots out the walls of the room as they all spring to their feet in consternation Only the figures and the bed remain visible

JOAN What! Must I burn again? Are none of you ready to receive me?

CAUCHON The heretic is always better dead And mortal eyes cannot distinguish the saint from the heretic Spare them [*He goes out as he came*]

DUNOIS Forgive us, Joan we are not yet good enough for you I shall go back to my bed [*He also goes*]

WARWICK We sincerely regret our little mistake, but political necessities, though

occasionally erroneous, are still imperative, so if you will be good enough to excuse me—
[*He steals discreetly away*]

THE ARCHBISHOP Your return would not make me the man you once thought me. The utmost I can say is that though I dare not bless you, I hope I may one day enter into your blessedness. Meanwhile, however—
[*He goes*]

THE INQUISITOR I who am of the dead, testified that day that you were innocent. But I do not see how The Inquisition could possibly be dispensed with under existing circumstances. Therefore—
[*He goes*]

DE STOGUMBER Oh, do not come back, you must not come back. I must die in peace. Give us peace in our time, O Lord!
[*He goes*]

THE GENTLEMAN The possibility of your resurrection was not contemplated in the recent proceedings for your canonization. I must return to Rome for fresh instructions.
[*He bows formally, and withdraws*]

THE EXECUTIONER As a master in my profession I have to consider its interests. And, after all, my first duty is to my wife and children. I must have time to think over this.
[*He goes*]

CHARLES Poor old Joan! They have all run away from you except this blackguard who

has to go back to hell at twelve o'clock. And what can I do but follow Jack Dunois' example, and go back to bed too?
[*He does so*]

JOAN [*sadly*] Goodnight, Charlie.

CHARLES [*mumbling in his pillows*] Goo ni
[*He sleeps. The darkness envelops the bed*]

JOAN [*to the soldier*] And you, my one faithful? What comfort have you for Saint Joan?

THE SOLDIER Well, what do they all amount to, these kings and captains and bishops and lawyers and such like? They just leave you in the ditch to bleed to death, and the next thing is, you meet them down there, for all the airs they give themselves. What I say is, you have as good a right to your notions as they have to theirs, and perhaps better.
[*Settling himself for a lecture on the subject*]
You see, it's like this. If— [*the first stroke of midnight is heard softly from a distant bell*]
Excuse me a pressing appointment— [*He goes on tiptoe*]

The last remaining rays of light gather into a white radiance descending on Joan. The hour continues to strike.

JOAN. O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?

THE END

XXXII

THE APPLE CART

A POLITICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

ACT I

An office in the royal palace. Two writing tables face each other from opposite sides of the room, leaving plenty of room between them. Each table has a chair by it for visitors. The door is in the middle of the farthest wall. The clock shews that it is a little past 11; and the light is that of a fine summer morning.

Sempronius, smart and still presentably young, shews his right profile as he sits at one of the tables opening the King's letters. Pamphilus, middle aged, shews his left as he leans back in his chair at the other table with a pile of the morning papers at his elbow, reading one of them. This goes on silently for some time. Then Pamphilus, putting down his paper, looks at Sempronius for a moment before speaking.

PAMPHILIUS What was your father?

SEMPRONIUS [*startled*] Eh?

PAMPHILIUS What was your father?

SEMPRONIUS My father?

PAMPHILIUS. Yes. What was he?

SEMPRONIUS A Ritualist.

PAMPHILIUS I don't mean his religion. I mean his profession. And his politics.

SEMPRONIUS He was a Ritualist by profession, a Ritualist in politics, a Ritualist in religion, a raging emotional Die Hard Ritualist right down to his boots.

PAMPHILIUS Do you mean that he was a parson?

SEMPRONIUS Not at all. He was a sort of spectacular artist. He got up pageants and Lord Mayors' Shows and military tattoos.

and big public ceremonies and things like that He arranged the last two coronations That was how I got my job here in the palace. All our royal people knew him quite well he was behind the scenes with them

PAMPHILIUS Behind the scenes and yet believed they were all real!

SEMPRONIUS Yes Believed in them with all his soul.

PAMPHILIUS Although he manufactured them himself?

SEMPRONIUS Certainly Do you suppose a baker cannot believe sincerely in the sacrifice of the Mass or in holy communion because he has baked the consecrated wafer himself?

PAMPHILIUS I never thought of that

SEMPRONIUS My father might have made millions in the theatres and film studios But he refused to touch them because the things they represented hadn't really happened He didn't mind doing the christening of Queen Elizabeth in Shakespear's Henry the Eighth because that had really happened It was a celebration of royalty But not anything romantic not though they offered him thousands

PAMPHILIUS Did you ever ask him what he really thought about it all? But of course you didn't one can't ask one's father anything about himself

SEMPRONIUS My dear Pam my father never thought He didn't know what thought meant Very few people do, you know He had vision actual bodily vision, I mean, and he had an oddly limited sort of imagination What I mean is that he couldn't imagine anything he didn't see, but he could imagine that what he did see was divine and holy and omniscient and omnipotent and eternal and everything that is impossible if only it looked splendid enough, and the organ was solemn enough, or the military bands brassy enough

PAMPHILIUS You mean that he had to get everything from outside

SEMPRONIUS Exactly He'd never have felt anything if he hadn't had parents to feel about in his childhood, and a wife and babies to feel about when he grew up He'd never have known anything if he hadn't been taught at school He couldn't amuse himself he had to pay oceans of money to other people to amuse him with all sorts of ghastly sports and pleasures that would have driven me into a monastery to escape from them You see it was all ritual he went to the

Riviera every winter just as he went to church

PAMPHILIUS By the way, is he alive? I should like to know him

SEMPRONIUS No He died in 1962, of solitude

PAMPHILIUS What do you mean? of solitude?

SEMPRONIUS He couldn't bear to be alone for a moment it was death to him Somebody had to be with him always

PAMPHILIUS Oh well, come! That was friendly and kindly It shows he had something inside him after all

SEMPRONIUS Not a bit He never talked to his friends He played cards with them They never exchanged a thought.

PAMPHILIUS He must have been a rum old bird

SEMPRONIUS Not rum enough to be noticed There are millions like him

PAMPHILIUS But what about his dying of solitude? Was he imprisoned?

SEMPRONIUS No His yacht struck a reef and sank somewhere off the north of Scotland, and he managed to swim to an uninhabited island All the rest were drowned, and he was not taken off for three weeks When they found him he was melancholy mad, poor old boy, and he never got over it. Simply from having no one to play cards with, and no church to go to

PAMPHILIUS My dear Sem one isn't alone on an uninhabited island My mother used to stand me on the table and make me recite about it.

[*He declaims*]

To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene
Where things that own not man's dominion
dwell

And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been,
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen
With the wild flock that never needs a fold,
Alone o'er steep and foaming falls to lean
This is not solitude 'tis but to hold
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her
stores unrolled

SEMPRONIUS. Now you have hit the really funny thing about my father All that about the lonely woods and the rest of it—what you call Nature—didn't exist for him It had to be something artificial to get at him. Nature to him meant nakedness, and naked-

ness only disgusted him. He wouldn't look at a horse grazing in a field; but put splendid trappings on it and stick it into a procession and he just loved it. The same with men and women: they were nothing to him until they were dressed up in fancy costumes and painted and wigged and titled. To him the sacredness of the priest was the beauty of his vestment, the loveliness of women the dazzle of their jewels and robes, the charm of the countryside not in its hills and trees, nor in the blue smoke from its cottages in the winter evenings, but of its temples, palaces, mansions, park gates, and porticoed country houses. Think of the horror of that island to him! A void! a place where he was deaf and dumb and blind and lonely! If only there had been a peacock with its tail in full bloom it might have saved his reason, but all the birds were gulls; and gulls are not decorative. Our King could have lived there for thirty years with nothing but his own thoughts. You would have been all right with a fishing rod and a golf ball with a bag of clubs. I should have been as happy as a man in a picture gallery looking at the dawns and sunsets, the changing seasons, the continual miracle of life ever renewing itself. Who could be dull with pools in the rocks to watch? Yet my father, with all that under his nose, was driven mad by its nothingness. They say that where there is nothing the king loses his rights. My father found that where there is nothing a man loses his reason and dies.

PAMPHILIUS Let me add that in this palace, when the king's letters are not ready for him at 12 o'clock, a secretary loses his job.

SEMPRONIUS [*hastily resuming his work*] Yes, devil take you, why did you start me talking before I had finished my work? You have nothing to do but pretend to read the newspapers for him, and when you say "Nothing particular this morning, Sir," all he says is "Thank Heaven!" But if I missed a note from one of his aunts inviting herself to tea, or a little line from Orinthia the Beloved marked "Strictly private and confidential to be opened by His Majesty alone," I should never hear the end of it. He had six love letters yesterday; and all he said when I told him was "Take them to the Queen." He thinks they amuse her. I believe they make her as sick as they make me.

PAMPHILIUS Do Orinthia's letters go to the Queen?

SEMPRONIUS No, by George! Even I don't read Orinthia's letters. My instructions are to read everything, but I take care to forget to open hers. And I notice that I am not rebuked for my negligence.

PAMPHILIUS [*thoughtfully*] I suppose—

SEMPRONIUS Oh shut up, Pam. I shall never get through if you go on talking.

PAMPHILIUS I was only going to say that I suppose—

SEMPRONIUS Something about Orinthia. Don't. If you indulge in supposition on that subject, you will lose your job, old chap. So stow it.

PAMPHILIUS Don't cry out before Orinthia is hurt, young chap. I was going to say that I suppose you know that that bull-roarer Boanerges has just been taken into the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, and that he is coming here today to give the King a piece of his mind, or what he calls his mind, about the crisis.

SEMPRONIUS What does the King care about the crisis? There has been a crisis every two months since he came to the throne, but he has always been too clever for them. He'll turn Boanerges inside out after letting him roar the palace down.

Boanerges enters, dressed in a Russian blouse and peaked cap, which he keeps on. He is fifty, heavily built and aggressively self-assertive.

BOANERGES. Look here. The King has an appointment with me at a quarter to twelve. How long more am I to be kept waiting?

SEMPRONIUS [*with cheerful politeness*] Good morning. Mr Boanerges, I think.

BOANERGES [*shortly, but a little taken aback*] Oh, good morning to you. They say that politeness is the punctuality of kings—

SEMPRONIUS The other way about, Mr Boanerges. Punctuality is the politeness of kings, and King Magnus is a model in that respect. Your arrival cannot have been announced to His Majesty. I will see about it [*He hurries out*].

PAMPHILIUS Be seated, Mr Boanerges.

BOANERGES [*seating himself by Pamphilus's writing table*] A nice lot of young upstarts you have in this palace, Mr—?

PAMPHILIUS Pamphilus is my name.

BOANERGES Oh yes. I've heard of you. You're one of the king's private secretaries.

PAMPHILIUS I am. And what have our young upstarts been doing to you, Mr Boanerges?

BOANERGES Well, I told one of them to tell the king I was here, and to look sharp about it. He looked at me as if I was a performing elephant, and took himself off after whispering to another flunkey. Then this other chap comes over to me and pretends he doesn't know who I am! asks me can he have my name! "My lad" I said "not to know me argues yourself unknown. You know who I am as well as I do myself. Go and tell the king I'm waiting for him, d'ye see?" So he took himself off with a flea in his ear. I waited until I was fed up with it, and then opened the nearest door and came in here.

PAMPHILIUS Young rascals! However, my friend Mr Sempronius will make it all right for you.

BOANERGES Oh that was Sempronius, was it. I've heard of him too.

PAMPHILIUS You seem to have heard of all of us. You will be quite at home in the palace now that you are a Cabinet Minister. By the way, may I congratulate you on your appointment—or rather congratulate the Cabinet on your accession?

SEMPRONIUS [*returning*] The King [*He goes to his table and takes the visitor's chair in his hand, ready for the king's instructions as to where to place it*].

Pamphilus rises. Boanerges turns to the door in his chair without rising. King Magnus, a tallish studious looking gentleman of 45 or thereabouts, enters, and comes quickly down the middle of the room to Boanerges, proffering his hand cordially.

MAGNUS You are very welcome to my little palace, Mr Boanerges. Wont you sit down?

BOANERGES I am sitting down.

MAGNUS True, Mr Boanerges. I had not noticed it. Forgive me force of habit.

He indicates to Sempronius that he wishes to sit near Boanerges, on his right. Sempronius places the chair accordingly.

MAGNUS You will allow me to be seated?

BOANERGES Oh, sit down, man, sit down. You're in your own house. Ceremony cuts no ice with me.

MAGNUS [*gratefully*] Thank you.

The King sits. Pamphilus sits. Sempronius returns to his table and sits.

MAGNUS It is a great pleasure to meet you at last, Mr Boanerges. I have followed your career with interest ever since you contested Northampton twenty-five years ago.

BOANERGES [*pleased and credulous*] I should

just think you have, King Magnus. I have made you sit up once or twice, eh?

MAGNUS [*smiling*] Your voice has shaken the throne oftener than that.

BOANERGES [*indicating the secretaries with a jerk of his head*] What about these two? Are they to overhear everything that passes?

MAGNUS My private secretaries. Do they incommode you?

BOANERGES Oh, they don't incommode me. I am ready to have our talk out in Trafalgar Square if you like, or have it broadcast on the wireless.

MAGNUS That would be a treat for my people, Mr Boanerges. I am sorry we have not arranged for it.

BOANERGES [*gathering himself together formidably*] Yes, but do you realize that I am going to say things to you that have never been said to a king before?

MAGNUS I am very glad indeed to hear it, Mr Boanerges. I thought I had already heard everything that could possibly be said to a king. I shall be grateful for the smallest novelty.

BOANERGES I warn you it won't be agreeable. I am a plain man, Magnus, a very plain man.

MAGNUS Not at all, I assure you—

BOANERGES [*indignantly*] I was not alluding to my personal appearance.

MAGNUS [*gravely*] Nor was I. Do not deceive yourself, Mr Boanerges. You are very far from being a plain man. To me you have always been an Enigma.

BOANERGES [*surprised and enormously flattered. He cannot help smiling with pleasure*] Well, perhaps I am a bit of an enigma. Perhaps I am.

MAGNUS [*humbly*] I wish I could see through you, Mr Boanerges. But I have not your sort of cleverness. I can only ask you to be frank with me.

BOANERGES [*now convinced that he has the upper hand*] You mean about the crisis. Well, frank is just what I have come here to be. And the first thing I am going to tell you frankly about it is that this country has got to be governed, not by you, but by your ministers.

MAGNUS I shall be only too grateful to them for taking a very difficult and thankless job off my hands.

BOANERGES But it's not on your hands. It's on your ministers' hands. You are only a con-

stitutional monarch Do you know what they call that in Belgium?

MAGNUS An indiarubber stamp, I think Am I right?

BOANERGES You are, King Magnus An indiarubber stamp That's what you have got to be, and don't you forget it

MAGNUS Yes that's what we are most of the time: both of us

BOANERGES [*outraged*] What do you mean? both of us?

MAGNUS They bring us papers We sign You have no time to read them, luckily for you But I am expected to read everything I do not always agree; but I must sign there is nothing else to be done For instance, death warrants Not only have I to sign the death warrants of persons who in my opinion ought not to be killed, but I may not even issue death warrants for a great many people who in my opinion ought to be killed.

BOANERGES [*sarcastic*] You'd like to be able to say "Off with his head!" wouldn't you?

MAGNUS Many men would hardly miss their heads, there is so little in them Still, killing is a serious business at least the person who is to be killed is usually conceited enough to think so I think that if there were a question of killing me—

BOANERGES [*grimly*] There may be, someday I have heard it discussed

MAGNUS. Oh, quite I have not forgotten King Charles's head Well, I hope it will be settled by a living person and not by an indiarubber stamp

BOANERGES It will be settled by the Home Secretary, your duly constituted democratic minister

MAGNUS Another indiarubber stamp, eh?

BOANERGES. At present, perhaps But not when I am Home Secretary, by Jingol! Nobody will make an indiarubber stamp of Bill Boanerges take that from me.

MAGNUS Of course not Is it not curious how people idealize their rulers? In the old days the king—poor man!—was a god, and was actually called God and worshipped as infallible and omniscient. That was monstrous—

BOANERGES It was silly: just silly

MAGNUS But was it half so silly as our pretence that he is an indiarubber stamp? The ancient Roman emperor-god had not infinite wisdom, infinite knowledge, infinite power, but he had some: perhaps even as

much as his ministers He was alive, not dead What man has ever approached either a king or a minister and been able to pick him up from the table and use him as one picks up and uses a piece of wood and brass and rubber? Permanent officials of your department will try to pick you up and use you like that. Nineteen times out of twenty you will have to let them do it, because you cannot know everything, and even if you could you cannot do everything and be everywhere But what about the twentieth time?

BOANERGES. The twentieth time they will find they are up against Bill Boanerges, eh?

MAGNUS Precisely The indiarubber stamp theory will not work, Mr Boanerges The old divine theory worked because there is a divine spark in us all; and the stupidest or worst monarch or minister, if not wholly god, is a bit of a god—an attempt at a god—however little the bit and unsuccessful the attempt But the indiarubber stamp theory breaks down in every real emergency, because no king or minister is the very least little bit like a stamp: he is a living soul

BOANERGES A soul, eh? You kings still believe in that, I suppose

MAGNUS I find the word convenient it is short and familiar. But if you dislike being called a soul, let us say that you are animate matter as distinguished from inanimate

BOANERGES [*not quite liking this*] I think I'd rather you called me a soul, you know, if you must call me anything at all I know I have too much matter about me: the doctor says I ought to knock off a stone or two; but there's something more to me than beef. Call it a soul if you like, only not in a superstitious sense, if you understand me

MAGNUS. Perfectly. So you see, Mr Boanerges, that though we have been dealing with one another for less than ten minutes, you have already led me into an intellectual discussion which shews that we are something more than a pair of indiarubber stamps You are up against my brains, such as they are

BOANERGES. And you are up against mine.

MAGNUS [*gallantly*] There can be no doubt of that

BOANERGES [*grinning*] Such as they are, eh?

MAGNUS It is not for me to make that qualification, except in my own case. Besides, you have given your proofs No common man could have risen as you have done As for

But why do you say "only a talker" Talkers are very formidable rivals for popular favor. The multitude understands talk: it does not understand work. I mean brain work, like yours and mine

BOANERGES That's true But I can talk Iky's head off

MAGNUS Lucky man: you have all the trumps in your hand But I, who cannot pretend to your gifts, am very glad that Iky cannot upset me as long as I am the nephew of my uncle

A young lady, dressed for walking, rushes in impetuously.

THE YOUNG LADY Papa I cannot find the address—

MAGNUS [*cutting her short*] No, no, no, dear not now. Go away Dont you see that I am particularly engaged with the President of the Board of Trade? You must excuse my unruly daughter, Mr Boanerges May I present her to you? Alice, my eldest girl. Mr Boanerges, dear

ALICE Oh! Are you the great Mr Boanerges?

BOANERGES [*rising in a glow of gratification*] Well, I dont call myself that, you know. But I believe the expression is in use, as you might say I am very pleased indeed to make the acquaintance of the Princess Royal

They shake hands

ALICE Why do you wear such awful clothes, Mr Boanerges?

MAGNUS [*remonstrating*] My dear—!

ALICE [*continuing*] I cant go out walking with you in that [*pointing to his blouse*]

BOANERGES The uniform of Labor, your Royal Highness I'm proud of it

ALICE Oh yes, I know all that, Mr Boanerges. But you dont look the part, you know. Anyone can see that you belong naturally to the governing class

BOANERGES [*struck by this view*] In a way, perhaps But I have earned my bread by my hands Not as a laborer, though. I am a skilled mechanic, or was until my country called on me to lead it

MAGNUS [*to Alice*] Well, my dear, you have broken up a most interesting conversation, and to me a most instructive one It's no use our trying to go on, Mr Boanerges I must go and find what my daughter wants, though I strongly suspect that what she really came in for was to see my wonderful new minister. We shall meet again presently you know

that the Prime Minister is calling on me today with some of his colleagues—including, I hope, yourself—to discuss the crisis. [*Taking Alice's arm and turning towards the door*] You will excuse us, wont you?

BOANERGES [*graciously*] Oh, thats all right Thats quite all right

The King and the Princess go out, apparently much pleased

BOANERGES [*to Sempronius and Pamphilius comprehensively*] Well, say what you will, the King is no fool Not when you know how to handle him

PAMPHILIUS Of course, that makes all the difference

BOANERGES And the girl hasnt been spoilt I was glad to see that She doesnt seem to know that she is the Princess Royal, eh?

SEMPRONIUS. Well, she wouldnt dream of giving herself any airs with you

BOANERGES What! Isnt she always like that?

SEMPRONIUS Oh no It's not everybody who is received as you have been I hope you have enjoyed your visit

BOANERGES Well, I pulled Magnus through it pretty well eh? Dont you think so?

SEMPRONIUS. He was pleased. You have a way with you, Mr President

BOANERGES Well, perhaps I have, perhaps I have.

A bevy of six Cabinet Ministers, resplendent in diplomatic uniforms, enters. Proteus the Prime Minister has on his left, Pliny, Chancellor of the Exchequer, goodhumored and conciliatory, and Nicobar, Foreign Secretary, snaky and censorious On his right Crassus, Colonial Secretary, elderly and anxious, and Balbus, Home Secretary, rude and thoughtless.

BALBUS Holy snakes! look at Bill [*To Boanerges*] Go home and dress yourself properly, man

NICOBAR. Where do you think you are?

CRASSUS Who do you think you are?

PLINY [*fingering the blouse*] Where did you buy it, Bill?

BOANERGES [*turning on them like a baited bear*] Well, if you come to that, who do you think you are, the lot of you?

PROTEUS [*conciliatory*] Never mind them, Bill. theyre jealous because they didnt think of it themselves. How did you get on with the King?

BOANERGES. Right as rain, Joe. You leave the King to me I know how to handle him If I'd been in the Cabinet these last three

months there'd have been no crisis

NICOBAR. He put you through it, did he?

BOANERGES What do you mean? put me through it? Is this a police office?

PLINY. The third degree is not unknown in this palace, my boy [*To Pamphilus*] Did the matron take a hand?

PAMPHILIUS No But the Princess Alice happened to drop in She was greatly impressed by the President

They all laugh uproariously at Boanerges

BOANERGES What in hell are you laughing at?

PROTEUS Take no notice of them, Bill they are only having their bit of fun with you as a new comer Come, lads! enough of fooling lets get to business [*He takes the chair vacated by the King*]

Sempronius and Pamphilus at once rise and go out busily, taking some of their papers with them Pliny takes Boanerges' chair, Balbus that of Sempronius, Boanerges that of Pamphilus, whilst Nicobar and Crassus take chairs from the wall and sit down at the ends of the writing tables, left and right of the Prime Minister respectively

PROTEUS Now to start with, do you chaps all fully realize that though we wiped out every other party at the last election, and have been in power for the last three years, this country has been governed during that time by the King?

NICOBAR I dont see that We—

PROTEUS [*impatiently*] Well, if you dont, then for Heaven's sake either resign and get out of the way of men who can see facts and look them in the face, or else take my job and lead the party yourself

NICOBAR The worst of you is that you wont face the fact that though youre Prime Minister youre not God Almighty The King cant do anything except what we advise him to do How can he govern the country if we have all the power and he has none?

BOANERGES Dont talk silly, Nick. This india-rubber stamp theory doesnt work. What man has ever approached a king or a minister and been able to pick him up from the table and use him as youd use a bit of wood and brass and rubber? The King's a live man, and what more are you, with your blessed advice?

PLINY Hullo, Bill! You have been having your mind improved by somebody

BOANERGES What do you mean? Isnt it what I have always said?

PROTEUS [*whose nerves are on edge*] Oh, will you stop squabbling What are we going to say to the King when he comes in? If you will only hold together and say the same thing—or let me say it—he must give way But he is as artful as the very devil. He'll have a pin to stick into the seat of every man of you If you all start quarrelling and scolding and bawling, which is just what he wants you to do, it will end in his having his own way as usual, because one man that has a mind and knows it can always beat ten men who havnt and dont

PLINY Steady, Prime Minister Youre overwrought

PROTEUS It's enough to drive a man mad. I am sorry

PLINY [*changing the subject*] Where's Mandy?

NICOBAR. And Lizzie?

PROTEUS Late as usual. Come! Business, business, business

BOANERGES [*thunderously*] Order order!

PROTEUS The King is working the Press against us The King is making speeches Things have come to a head. He said yesterday on the opening of the new Chamber of Commerce building that the king's veto is the only remaining defence of the people against corrupt legislation

BOANERGES So it is, by Jingo What other defence is there? Democracy? Yah! We know what Democracy is worth What we need is a Strong Man

NICOBAR [*sneering*] Yourself, for instance

BOANERGES I should stand a better chance than you, my lad, if we were a Republic, and the people could choose And let me tell you that a republican president has more power than a king because the people know that they need a Strong Man to protect them against the rich

PROTEUS [*flinging himself back in his chair in desperation*] This is a nice thing Two Labor papers have leading articles this morning supporting the King, and the latest addition to the Cabinet here is a King's man I resign

General consternation except on the part of Nicobar, who displays cheerful unconcern, and of Boanerges, who squares himself with an iron face

PLINY } No dont do that, Joe

BALBUS } What! Now! You cant You mustnt

CRASSUS } Of course not Out of the question

PROTEUS No use. [*Rising*] I resign, I tell you You can all go to the devil. I have lost my health, and almost lost my reason, trying to keep this Cabinet together in the face of the cunningest enemy popular government has ever had to face I have had enough of it. [*Sitting down again*] I resign

CRASSUS But not at such a moment as this Dont let us swop horses when crossing a stream

NICOBAR Why not, if the horse you have got is subject to hysterics?

BOANERGES Not to mention that you may have more than one horse at your disposal

PROTEUS Right you are. Perfectly true Take my job, Nick. It's vacant for you, Bill. I wish you joy of it

PLINY Now boys, boys, boys be good. We cant make a new Cabinet before Magnus comes in You have something in your pocket, Joe Out with it Read it to them

PROTEUS [*taking a paper from his pocket*] What I was going to propose—and you can take it or leave it—is an ultimatum

CRASSUS Good!

PROTEUS Either he signs this, or—[*he pauses significantly*]

NICOBAR Or what?

PROTEUS [*disgusted*] Oh, you make me sick

NICOBAR Youre sick already, by your own account. I only ask, suppose he refuses to sign your ultimatum?

PROTEUS You call yourself a Cabinet Minister, and you cant answer that!

NICOBAR No I cant. I press my question You said he must sign, OR I ask, or what?

PROTEUS Or we resign and tell the country that we cant carry on the King's Government under conditions which destroy our responsibility.

BALBUS Thatll do it He couldnt face that

CRASSUS Yes. thatll bunker him.

PROTEUS Is that agreed?

PLINY

CRASSUS. } Yes, yes, yes, 'greed 'greed 'greed
BALBUS. } 'greed

BOANERGES I retain an open mind Let us hear the ultimatum

NICOBAR Yes lets hear it

PROTEUS Memorandum of understanding arrived at—

The King enters, with Amanda, Postmistress General, a merry lady in uniform like the men, on his left, and Lysistrata, Powermistress General, a grave lady in academic robes, on his

right All rise The Prime Minister's face darkens

MAGNUS Welcome, gentlemen I hope I am not too early [*Noting the Prime Minister's scowl*] Am I intruding?

PROTEUS I protest It is intolerable I call a conference of my Cabinet to consider our position in regard to the prerogative; and I find the two lady members, the Postmistress General and the Powermistress General, closeted with your majesty instead of being in their places to confer with me.

LYSISTRATA You mind your own business, Joe

MAGNUS. Oh no really, really, my dear Lysistrata, you must not take that line Our business is to meddle in everybody's business A Prime Minister is a busybody by profession So is a monarch So are we all.

LYSISTRATA. Well, they say everybody's business is nobody's business, which is just what Joe is fit for [*She takes a chair from the hall with a ponderful hand, and swings it forward to the inside corner of Sempronius's table, where she stands waiting for the King to sit down*]

PROTEUS. This is what I have to put up with when I am on the verge of a nervous breakdown [*he sits down distractedly, and buries his face in his hands*]

AMANDA [*going to him and petting him*] Come, Joe! dont make a scene You asked for it, you know

NICOBAR. What do you go provoking Lizzie for like that? You know she has a temper.

LYSISTRATA There is nothing whatever wrong with my temper. But I am not going to stand any of Joe's nonsense, and the sooner he makes up his mind to that the smoother our proceedings are likely to be

BOANERGES I protest I say, let us be dignified I say, let us respect ourselves and respect the throne All this Joe and Bill and Nick and Lizzie we might as well be hobnobbing in a fried fish shop The Prime Minister is the prime minister: he isnt Joe The Powermistress isnt Lizzie she's Lysis Traitor.

LYSISTRATA [*who has evidently been a schoolmistress*] Certainly not, Bill She is Ly Sistrata. You had better say Lizzie. it is easier to pronounce.

BOANERGES [*scornfully*] Ly Sistrata! A more foolish affectation I never heard. you might as well call me Bo Annerjeeze [*he flings hur-*

self into his chair].

MAGNUS [*sweetly*] Shall we sit, ladies and gentlemen?

Boanerges hastily rises and sits down again. The King sits in Pliny's chair. Lysistrata and the rest of the men resume their seats, leaving Pliny and Amanda standing. Amanda takes an empty chair in each hand and plants them side by side between the King and the table of Pamphilius.

AMANDA There you are, Plin. [*She sits next the table*]

PLINY. Ta ta, Mandy. Pardon me I should have said Amanda [*He sits next the King*]

AMANDA Dont mention it, darling

BOANERGES Order, order!

AMANDA [*waves him a kiss*]!!

MAGNUS Prime Minister the word is with you Why have you all simultaneously given me the great pleasure of exercising your constitutional right of access to the sovereign?

LYSISTRATA Have I that right, sir, or havnt I?

MAGNUS Most undoubtedly you have

LYSISTRATA You hear that, Joe?

PROTEUS I—

BALBUS Oh for Heaven's sake dont contradict her, Joe Weshall never get anywhere at this rate Come to the crisis

NICOBAR.	{ <i>together</i> }	{Yes yes the crisis!
CRASSUS		{Yes yes come along!
PLINY		{The crisis out with it!

BALBUS The ultimatum Lets have the ultimatum

MAGNUS Oh, there is an ultimatum! I gathered from yesterday's evening papers that there is a crisis—another crisis But the ultimatum is new to me [*To Proteus*] Have you an ultimatum?

PROTEUS Your Majesty's allusion to the royal veto in a speech yesterday has brought matters to a head

MAGNUS It was perhaps indelicate But you all allude so freely to your own powers—to the supremacy of Parliament and the voice of the people and so forth—that I fear I have lost any little delicacy I ever possessed If you may flourish your thunderbolts why may I not shoulder my little popgun of a veto and strut up and down with it for a moment?

NICOBAR This is not a subject for jesting—

MAGNUS [*interrupting him quickly*] I am not jesting, Mr Nicobar But I am certainly trying to discuss our differences in a good-humored manner Do you wish me to lose

my temper and make scenes?

AMANDA Oh please no, your Majesty We get enough of that from Joe

PROTEUS I pro—

MAGNUS [*his hand persuasively on the Prime Minister's arm*] Take care, Prime Minister take care do not let your wily Postmistress General provoke you to supply the evidence against yourself

All the rest laugh

PROTEUS [*coolly*] I thank your Majesty for the caution The Postmistress General has never forgiven me for not making her First Lady of the Admiralty She has three nephews in the navy

AMANDA Oh you— [*She swallows the epithet, and contents herself with shaking her fist at the Premier*]

MAGNUS Tch-tch-tch! Gently, Amanda, gently Three very promising lads they do you credit

AMANDA I never wanted them to go to sea. I could have found them better jobs in the Post Office

MAGNUS Apart from Amanda's family relations, am I face to face with a united Cabinet?

PLINY No, sir You are face to face with a squabbling Cabinet, but, on the constitutional question, united we stand divided we fall

BALBUS That is so

NICOBAR Hear hear!

MAGNUS What is the constitutional question? Do you deny the royal veto? or do you object only to my reminding my subjects of its existence?

NICOBAR What we say is that the king has no right to remind his subjects of anything constitutional except by the advice of the Prime Minister, and in words which he has read and approved

MAGNUS Which Prime Minister? There are so many of them in the Cabinet

BOANERGES There! Serves you all right! Arnt you ashamed of yourselves? But I am not surprised, Joseph Proteus I own I like a Prime Minister that knows how to be a Prime Minister Why do you let them take the word out of your mouth every time?

PROTEUS If His Majesty wants a Cabinet of dumb dogs he will not get it from my party

BALBUS Hear hear, Joe!

MAGNUS Heaven forbid! The variety of opinion in the Cabinet is always most in-

structive and interesting Who is to be its spokesman today?

PROTEUS I know your Majesty's opinion of me, but let—

MAGNUS [*before he can proceed*] Let me state it quite frankly My opinion of you is that no man knows better than you when to speak and when to let others speak for you, when to make scenes and threaten resignation, and when to be as cool as a cucumber

PROTEUS [*not altogether displeased*] Well, sir, I hope I am not such a fool as some fools think me I may not always keep my temper You would not be surprised at that if you knew how much temper I have to keep [*He straightens up and becomes impressively eloquent*] At this moment my cue is to shew you, not my own temper, but the temper of my Cabinet What the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary have told you is true. If we are to carry on your government we cannot have you making speeches that express your own opinions and not ours We cannot have you implying that everything that is of any value in our legislation is your doing and not ours We cannot have you telling people that their only safeguard against the political encroachments of big business whilst we are doing nothing but bungling and squabbling is your power of veto It has got to stop, once for all

BALBUS. } Hear hear!
NICOBAR }

PROTEUS Is that clear?

MAGNUS Far clearer than I have ever dared to make it, Mr Proteus Except, by the way, on one point. When you say that all this of which you complain must cease once for all, do you mean that henceforth I am to agree with you or you with me?

PROTEUS I mean that when you disagree with us you are to keep your disagreement to yourself.

MAGNUS That would be a very heavy responsibility for me If I see you leading the nation over the edge of a precipice may I not warn it?

BALBUS It is our business to warn it, not yours

MAGNUS. Suppose you dont do your business! Suppose you dont see the danger! That has happened It may happen again

CRASSUS [*insinuating*] As democrats, I think we are bound to proceed on the assumption

that such a thing cannot happen

BOANERGES Rot! It's happening all the time until somebody has the gumption to put his foot down and stop it

CRASSUS Yes. I know But that is not democracy

BOANERGES Democracy be— [*he leaves the word unspoken*] I have thirty years experience of democracy So have most of you I say no more.

BALBUS. Wages are too high, if you ask me Anybody can earn from five to twenty pounds a week now, and a big dole when there is no job for him And what Englishman will give his mind to politics as long as he can afford to keep a motor car?

NICOBAR How many voted at the last election? Not seven per cent of the register

BALBUS Yes, and the seven per cent were only a parcel of sillies playing at ins and outs To make democracy work in Crassus's way we need poverty and hardship

PROTEUS [*emphatically*] And we have abolished poverty and hardship That is why the people trust us [*To the King*] And that is why you will have to give way to us We have the people of England in comfort—solid middle class comfort—at our backs

MAGNUS No we have not abolished poverty and hardship Our big business men have abolished them But how? By sending our capital abroad to places where poverty and hardship still exist in other words, where labor is cheap. We live in comfort on the imported profits of that capital We are all ladies and gentlemen now.

NICOBAR Well, what more do you want?

PLINY You surely dont grudge us our wonderful prosperity, sir

MAGNUS I want it to last

NICOBAR Why shouldnt it last? [*Rising*] Own the truth You had rather have the people poor, and pose as their champion and savior, than have to admit that the people are better off under our government—under our squabbling and bungling, as you call it

MAGNUS No. it was the Prime Minister who used those expressions.

NICOBAR Dont quibble he was quoting them from your reptile press. What I say is that we stand for high wages, and you are always belittling and opposing the men that pay them Well, the voters like high wages. They know when they are well off; and they dont know what you are grumbling about;

and that's what will beat you every time you try to stir them against us [*he resumes his seat*]

PLINY There is no need to rub it in like that, Nick. We're all good friends. Nobody objects to prosperity.

MAGNUS You think this prosperity is safe?

NICOBAR Safe!

PLINY Oh come, sir! Really!

BALBUS Safe! Look at my constituency. Northeast-by-north Birmingham, with its four square miles of confectionery works! Do you know that in the Christmas cracker trade Birmingham is the workshop of the world?

CRASSUS Take Gateshead and Middlesbrough alone! Do you know that there has not been a day's unemployment there for five years past, and that their daily output of chocolate creams totals up to twenty thousand tons?

MAGNUS It is certainly a consoling thought that if we were peacefully blockaded by the League of Nations we could live for at least three weeks on our chocolate creams.

NICOBAR You needn't sneer at the sweets we turn out plenty of solid stuff. Where will you find the equal of the English golf club?

BALBUS Look at the potteries, the new crown Derby! the new Chelsea! Look at the tapestries! Why, Greenwich Goblin has chased the French stuff out of the market.

CRASSUS Don't forget our racing motor boats and cars, sir, the finest on earth, and all individually designed. No cheap mass production stuff there.

PLINY And our live stock! Can you beat the English polo pony?

AMANDA Or the English parlormaid? She wins in all the international beauty shows.

PLINY Now Mandy, Mandy! None of your triviality.

MAGNUS I am not sure that the British parlormaid is not the only real asset in your balance sheet.

AMANDA [*triumphant*] Aha! [*To Pliny*] You go home to bed and reflect on that, old man.

PROTEUS Well, sir? Are you satisfied that we have the best paid proletariat in the world on our side?

MAGNUS [*gravely*] I dread revolution.

All except the two women laugh uproariously at this.

BOANERGES I must join them there, sir. I am as much against chocolate creams as

you are. They never agree with me. But a revolution in England!! Put that out of your head, sir. Not if you were to tear up Magna Carta in Trafalgar Square, and light the fires of Smithfield to burn every member of the House of Commons.

MAGNUS I was not thinking of a revolution in England. I was thinking of the countries on whose tribute we are living. Suppose it occurs to them to stop paying it! That has happened before.

PLINY Oh no, sir, no, no, no. What would become of their foreign trade with us?

MAGNUS At a pinch, I think they could do without the Christmas crackers.

CRASSUS Oh, that's childish.

MAGNUS Children in their innocence are sometimes very practical, Mr Colonial Secretary. The more I see of the sort of prosperity that comes of your leaving our vital industries to big business men as long as they keep your constituents quiet with high wages, the more I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano.

LYSISTRATA [*who has been listening with implacable contempt to the discussion, suddenly breaks in in a sepulchral contralto*] Hear, hear! My department was perfectly able and ready to deal with the supply of power from the tides in the north of Scotland, and you gave it away, like the boobs you are, to the Pentland Firth Syndicate, a gang of foreign capitalists who will make billions out of it at the people's expense while we are bungling and squabbling. Crassus worked that. His uncle is chairman.

CRASSUS A lie. A flat lie. He is not related to me. He is only my stepson's father-in-law.

BALBUS I demand an explanation of the words bungling and squabbling. We have had quite enough of them here today. Who are you getting at? It was not I who bungled the Factory Bill. I found it on my desk when I took office, with all His Majesty's suggestions in the margin, and you know it.

PROTEUS Have you all done playing straight into His Majesty's hand, and making my situation here impossible?

Guilty silence.

PROTEUS [*proceeding deliberately and authoritatively*] The question before us is not one of our manners and our abilities. His Majesty will not press that question, because if he did he would oblige us to raise the question of his own morals.

MAGNUS [*starts*] What!

BALBUS Good, Joe!

CRASSUS [*aside to Amanda*] That's got him

MAGNUS Am I to take that threat seriously, Mr Proteus?

PROTEUS If you try to prejudice what is a purely constitutional question by personal scandal, it will be easy enough for us to throw your mud back. In this conflict we are the challengers. You have the choice of weapons. If you choose scandal, we'll take you on at that. Personally I shall deplore it if you do. No good will come of washing our dirty linen in public. But don't make any mistake as to what will happen. I will be plain with you. I will dot the Is and cross the Ts. You will say that Crassus is a jobber.

CRASSUS [*springing up*] I—

PROTEUS [*fiercely crushing him*] Sit down. Leave this to me.

CRASSUS [*sits*] I a jobber! Well!

PROTEUS [*continuing*] You will say that I should never have given the Home Office to a bully like Balbus—

BALBUS [*intimidated by the fate of Crassus, but unable to forbear a protest*] Look here, Joe—

PROTEUS. You shut up, Bert. It's true.

BALBUS [*subsides with a shrug*]

PROTEUS Well, what will happen? There will be no demals, no excuses, no vindications. We shall not fall into that trap, clever as you are at setting it. Crassus will say just simply that you are a freethinker. And Balbus will say that you are a libertine.

THE MALE CABINET [*below their breaths*] Aha-a-a-a-h!!!

PROTEUS Now, King Magnus! Our cards are on the table. What have you to say?

MAGNUS Admirably put! People ask how it is that with all these strong characters around you hold your own as the only possible Prime Minister, in spite of your hysterics and tantrums, your secretiveness and your appalling laziness—

BALBUS [*delighted*] Hear hear! You're getting it now, Joe.

MAGNUS [*continuing*] But when the decisive moment comes, they find out what a wonderful man you are.

PROTEUS I am not a wonderful man. There is not a man or woman here whose job I could do as well as they do it. I am Prime Minister for the same reason that all Prime Ministers have been Prime Ministers because I am

good for nothing else. But I can keep to the point—when it suits me. And I can keep you to the point, sir, whether it suits you or not.

MAGNUS At all events you do not flatter kings. One of them, at least, is grateful to you for that.

PROTEUS Kings, as you and I very well know, rule their ministers by flattering them; and now that you are the only king left in the civilized half of Europe Nature seems to have concentrated in you all the genius for flattery that she used to have to divide between half a dozen kings, three emperors, and a Sultan.

MAGNUS But what interest has a king in flattering a subject?

AMANDA Suppose she's a good-looking woman, sir!

NICOBAR Suppose he has a lot of money, and the king's hard up!

PROTEUS Suppose he is a Prime Minister, and you can do nothing except by his advice.

MAGNUS [*smiling with his utmost charm*] Ah, there you have hit the nail on the head. Well, I suppose I must surrender. I am beaten. You are all too clever for me.

BOANERGES Well, nothing can be fairer than that.

PLINY [*rubbing his hands*] You are a gentleman, sir. We shant rub it in, you know.

BALBUS Ever the best of friends. I am the last to kick a man when he's down.

CRASSUS I may be a jobber, but nobody shall say that I am an ungenerous opponent.

BOANERGES [*suddenly overwhelmed with emotion, rises and begins singing in stentorian tones*]

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind—

Amanda bursts into uncontrollable laughter. The King looks reproachfully at her, struggling hard to keep his countenance. The others are beginning to join in the chorus when Proteus rises in a fury.

PROTEUS Are you all drunk?

Dead silence. Boanerges sits down hastily. The other singers pretend that they have disapproved of his minstrelsy.

PROTEUS You are at present engaged in a tug of war with the King. the tug of your lives. You think you have won. You havnt. All that has happened is that the King has let go the rope. You are sprawling on your backs; and he is laughing at you. Look at him! [*He sits down contemptuously*]

MAGNUS [*making no further attempt to conceal*

his merriment] Come to my rescue, Amanda
It was you who set me off

AMANDA [*wreathed with smiles*] You got me so nicely, sir [*To Boanerges*] Bill you are a great boob

BOANERGES I dont understand this I understood His Majesty to give way to us in, I must say, the handsomest manner Cant we take our victory like gentlemen?

MAGNUS Perhaps I had better explain I quite appreciate the frank and magnanimous spirit—may I say the English spirit?—in which my little concession has been received, especially by you, Mr Boanerges But in truth it leaves matters just where they were, for I should never have dreamt of entering on a campaign of recrimination such as the Prime Minister suggested As he has reminded you, my own character is far too vulnerable A king is not allowed the luxury of a good character Our country has produced millions of blameless greengrocers, but not one blameless monarch I have to rule over more religious sects than I can count To rule them impartially I must not belong to any of them, and they all regard people who do not belong to them as atheists My court includes several perfectly respectable wives and mothers whose strange vanity it is to be talked about as abandoned females To gain the reputation of being the king's mistress they would do almost anything except give the unfortunate monarch the pleasure of substantiating their claim Side by side with them are the ladies who are really unscrupulous They are so careful of their reputations that they lose no opportunity of indignantly denying that they have ever yielded to solicitations which have in fact never been made to them Thus every king is supposed to be a libertine, and as, oddly enough, he owes a great part of his popularity to this belief, he cannot deny it without deeply disappointing his subjects

There is a rather grim silence, during which the King looks round in vain for some encouraging response

LYSISTRATA [*severely*] Your Majesty's private affairs do not concern us, in any case

AMANDA [*splutters into an irrepressible laugh*]!

MAGNUS [*looks reproachfully at Amanda*]!

AMANDA [*composing her features as best she can*] Excuse me

CRASSUS I hope your Majesty recognizes that kings are not the only people to whom

certain sorts of mud always stick, no matter what fool throws them Call a minister a jobber—

BALBUS Or a bungler

CRASSUS Yes, or a bungler, and everybody believes it Jobbery and incompetence are the two sorts of mud that stick to us, no matter how honest or capable we are, and we havnt the royal advantage that you enjoy, that the more the ladies take away your character the better the people like you

BOANERGES [*suddenly*] Prime Minister will you tell me what the Postmistress General is sniggering at?

AMANDA This is a free country, Bill A sense of humor is not a crime And when the King is not setting me off, you are

BOANERGES Where is the joke? I dont see it.

AMANDA If you could see a joke, Bill, you wouldnt be the great popular orator you are

BOANERGES Thank Heaven, I am not a silly giggler like some I could mention

AMANDA Thanks, dearest Bill. Now Joe dont you think you have let us run loose long enough? What about that ultimatum?

MAGNUS [*shaking his head at her*] Traitor!

PROTEUS I am in no hurry His Majesty's speeches are very wise and interesting, and your back chat amuses both you and him But the ultimatum is here all the time, and I shall not leave this room until I have His Majesty's signed pledge that its conditions will be observed.

All become gravely attentive

MAGNUS What are its terms?

PROTEUS First, no more royal speeches

MAGNUS What! Not even if you dictate them?

PROTEUS Not even if we dictate them Your Majesty has a way of unrolling the manuscript and winking—

MAGNUS Winking!

PROTEUS You know what I mean The best speech in the world can be read in such a way as to set the audience laughing at it We have had enough of that So, in future, no speeches

MAGNUS A dumb king?

PROTEUS Of course we cannot object to such speeches as "We declare this foundation stone well and truly laid" and so forth But politically, yes a dumb king

PLINY [*to soften it*] A constitutional king

PROTEUS [*implacably*] A dumb king

MAGNUS Him! What next?

PROTEUS. The working of the Press from the palace back stairs must cease.

MAGNUS. You know that I have no control of the Press. The Press is in the hands of men much richer than I, who would not insert a single paragraph against their own interests even if it were signed by my own hand and sent to them with a royal command.

PROTEUS. We know that. But though these men are richer than you, they are not cleverer. They get amusing articles, spiced with exclusive backstairs information, that don't seem to them to have anything to do with politics. The next thing they know is that their pet shares have dropped fifteen points; that capital is frightened off their best prospectuses, and that some of the best measures in our party program are made to look like city jobs.

MAGNUS. Am I supposed to write these articles?

NICOBAR. Your man Sempronius does. I can spot his fist out of fifty columns.

CRASSUS. So can I. When he is getting at me he always begins the sentence with "Singularity enough."

PLINY [*chuckling*]. That's his trademark. "Singularity enough." Ha! ha!

MAGNUS. Is there to be any restriction on the other side? I have noticed, for instance, that in a certain newspaper which loses no opportunity of disparaging the throne, the last sentence of the leading article almost invariably begins with the words "Once for all." Whose trademark is that?

PROTEUS. Mine.

MAGNUS. Frank, Mr Proteus.

PROTEUS. I know when to be frank. I learnt the trick from Your Majesty.

AMANDA [*tries not to laugh*].

MAGNUS [*gently reproachful*]. Amanda, what is the joke now? I am surprised at you.

AMANDA. Joe frank! When I want to find out what he is up to I have to come and ask your Majesty.

LYSISTRATA. That is perfectly true. In this Cabinet there is no such thing as a policy. Every man plays for his own hand.

NICOBAR. It's like a game of cards.

BALBUS. Only there are no partners.

LYSISTRATA. Except Crassus and Nicobar.

PLINY. Good, Lizzie! He! he! he!

NICOBAR. What do you mean?

LYSISTRATA. You know quite well what I mean. When will you learn, Nicobar, that it

is no use trying to browbeat me. I began life as a schoolmistress, and I can browbeat any man in this Cabinet or out of it if he is fool enough to try to compete with me in that department.

BOANERGES. Order! order! Cannot the Prime Minister check these unseemly personalities?

PROTEUS. They give me time to think, Bill. When you have had as much parliamentary experience as I have you will be very glad of an interruption occasionally. May I proceed?

Silence

PROTEUS. His Majesty asks whether the restriction on press campaigning is to be entirely one-sided. That, I take it, sir, is your question.

MAGNUS [*nods assent*].

PROTEUS. The answer is in the affirmative.

BALBUS. Good!

MAGNUS. Anything more?

PROTEUS. Yes, one thing more. The veto must not be mentioned again. That can apply to both sides, if you like. The veto is dead.

MAGNUS. May we not make a historical reference to the corpse?

PROTEUS. No. I cannot carry on the King's government unless I can give pledges and carry them out. What is my pledge worth if our constituents are reminded every day that the King may veto anything that Parliament does? Do you expect me to say, when I am asked for a pledge, "You must ask the King"?

MAGNUS. I have to say "You must ask the Prime Minister."

PLINY [*consoling him*]. That's the constitution, you know.

MAGNUS. Quite. I only mention it to shew that the Prime Minister does not really wish to kill the veto. He only wishes to move it to next door.

PROTEUS. The people live next door. The name on the brass plate is Public Opinion.

MAGNUS [*gravely*]. Admirably turned, Mr Prime Minister, but unreal. I am far more subject to public opinion than you, because, thanks to the general belief in democracy, you can always pretend that what you do is done by the will of the people, who, God knows, never dreamt of it, and would not have understood it if they had; whereas, for what a king does, he, and he alone, is held responsible. A demagogue may steal a horse

where a king dare not look over a hedge.

LYSISTRATA I doubt if that is any longer true, sir I know that I get blamed for everything that goes wrong in my department

MAGNUS Ah! But what a despot you are, Lysistrata! Granted, however, that the people have found out long ago that democracy is humbug, and that instead of establishing responsible government it has abolished it, do you not see what this means?

BOANERGES [*scandalized*] Steady, steady! I cannot sit here and listen to such a word as humbug being applied to democracy I am sorry, sir, but with all respect for you, I really must draw the line at that

MAGNUS You are right, Mr Boanerges, as you always are Democracy is a very real thing, with much less humbug about it than many older institutions But it means, not that the people govern, but that the responsibility and the veto now belong neither to kings nor demagogues as such, but to whoever is clever enough to get them

LYSISTRATA Yourself, sir, for example?

MAGNUS I think I am in the running That is why I do not feel bound to accept this ultimatum By signing it I put myself out of the running Why should I?

BALBUS Because you're the king that's why

MAGNUS Does it follow?

PROTEUS If two men ride the same horse, one must ride behind

LYSISTRATA Which?

PROTEUS [*turning to her sharply*] What was that you said?

LYSISTRATA [*with placid but formidable obstinacy and ironical explicitness*] I said Which? You said that if two men rode the same horse one of them must ride behind I said Which? [*Explanatorily*] Which man must ride behind?

AMANDA Got it, Joe?

PROTEUS That is exactly the question that has to be settled here and now

AMANDA. "Once for all"

Everybody laughs except Proteus, who rises in a fury

PROTEUS I will not stand this perpetual tomfooling I had rather be a dog than the Prime Minister of a country where the only things the inhabitants can be serious about are football and refreshments Lick the king's boots that is all you are fit for [*He dashes out of the room*]

BALBUS You've done it now, Mandy I hope you're proud of yourself

MAGNUS It is you, Amanda, who should go and coax him back But I suppose I must do it myself, as usual Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen

He rises The rest rise He goes out

BOANERGES I told you I told you what would come of conducting a conference with His Majesty as if it were a smoking concert I am disgusted [*He flings himself back into his chair*]

BALBUS We'd just cornered the old fox, and then Amanda must have her silly laugh and let him out of it [*he sits*]

NICOBAR What are we to do now? that's what I want to know

AMANDA [*incorrigible*] I suggest a little community singing [*she makes conductorlike gestures*]

NICOBAR Yah! [*he sits down very sulkily*]

AMANDA [*sits down with a little splutter of laughter*]

CRASSUS [*thoughtful*] Take it easy, friends Joe knows what he is about

LYSISTRATA Of course he does I can excuse you, Bill, because it's your first day in the Cabinet But if the rest of you haven't found out by this time that Joe's rages are invariably calculated, then nothing will ever teach you anything [*she sits down contemptuously*]

BOANERGES [*in his grandest manner*] Well, madam, I know I am a newcomer everything must have a beginning I am open to argument and conviction The Prime Minister brought this conference, in what I admit was a very able and resolute manner, to the verge of a decision Then, in a fit of childish temper he breaks up the conference, leaving us looking like fools with nothing done And you tell me he did it on purpose! Where was the advantage to him in such a display? answer me that

LYSISTRATA He is settling the whole business with the King behind our backs That is what Joe always contrives to do, by hook or crook.

PLINY You didn't arrange it with him, Mandy did you?

AMANDA There wasn't any need to arrange it Joe can always depend on one or other of us saying something that will give him an excuse for flying out

CRASSUS In my opinion, ladies and gentlemen, we have done our bit, and may leave the rest to Joe Matters had reached a point at which it was yes or no between the Cabinet

and the Crown. There is only one sort of committee that is better than a committee of two, and that is a committee of one. Like the family in Wordsworth's poem, we are seven—

LYSISTRATA [Eight]

CRASSUS Well, seven or eight, we were too many for the final grapple. Two persons sticking to the point are worth eight all over the shop. So my advice is that we just sit here quietly until Joe comes back and tells us what's been settled. Perhaps Amanda will oblige with a song. [*He resumes his seat*]

The King returns with Proteus, who looks glum. All rise. The two resume their seats in silence. The rest sit down.

MAGNUS [*very grave*] The Prime Minister has been good enough to pursue the discussion with me in private to a point at which the issue is now clear. If I do not accept the ultimatum I shall receive your resignations and his and the country will learn from his explanatory speech in the House of Commons that it is to choose between Cabinet government and monarchical government. An issue on which I frankly say that I should be very sorry to win, as I cannot carry on without the support of a body of ministers whose existence gives the English people a sensation of self-government.

AMANDA [*splutters*]¹

CRASSUS [*whispers*] Shut up, will you?

MAGNUS [*continuing*] Naturally I want to avert a conflict in which success would damage me and failure disable me. But you tell me that I can do so only by signing pledges which would make me a mere Lord Chamberlain, without even the despotism which he exercises over the theatre. I should sink below the level of the meanest of my subjects, my sole privilege being that of being shot at when some victim of misgovernment resorts to assassination to avenge himself. How am I to defend myself? You are many. I oppose you single-handed. There was a time when the king could depend on the support of the aristocracy and the cultivated bourgeoisie. Today there is not a single aristocrat left in politics, not a single member of the professions, not a single leading personage in big business or finance. They are richer than ever, more powerful than ever, more able and better educated than ever. But not one of them will touch this drudgery of government, this public work that never ends because we

cannot finish one job without creating ten fresh ones. We get no thanks for it because ninety-nine hundredths of it is unknown to the people, and the remaining hundredth is resented by them as an invasion of their liberty or an increase in their taxation. It wears out the strongest man, and even the strongest woman, in five or six years. It slows down to nothing when we are fresh from our holidays and best able to bear it, and rises in an overwhelming wave through some unforeseen catastrophe when we are on the verge of nervous breakdown from overwork and fit for rest and sleep only. And this drudgery, remember, is a sweated trade, the only one now left in this country. My civil list leaves me a poor man among multi-millionaires. Your salaries can be earned ten times over in the city by anyone with outstanding organizing or administrative ability. History tells us that the first Lord Chancellor who abandoned the woolsack for the city board-room struck the nation with amazement. To-day the nation would be equally amazed if a man of his ability thought it worth his while to prefer the woolsack even to the stool of an office boy as a jumping-off place for his ambition. Our work is no longer even respected. It is looked down on by our men of genius as dirty work. What great actor would exchange his stage? what great barrister his court? what great preacher his pulpit? for the squalor of the political arena in which we have to struggle with foolish factions in parliament and with ignorant voters in the constituencies? The scientists will have nothing to do with us; for the atmosphere of politics is not the atmosphere of science. Even political science, the science by which civilization must live or die, is busy explaining the past whilst we have to grapple with the present: it leaves the ground before our feet in black darkness whilst it lights up every corner of the landscape behind us. All the talent and genius of the country is bought up by the flood of unearned money. On that poisoned wealth talent and genius live far more luxuriously in the service of the rich than we in the service of our country. Politics, once the centre of attraction for ability, public spirit, and ambition, has now become the refuge of a few fanciers of public speaking and party intrigue who find all the other avenues to distinction closed to them either by their lack of practical

ability, their comparative poverty and lack of education, or, let me hasten to add, their hatred of oppression and injustice, and their contempt for the chicaneries and false pretences of commercialized professionalism. History tells us of a gentleman-statesman who declared that such people were not fit to govern. Within a year it was discovered that they could govern at least as well as anyone else who could be persuaded to take on the job. Then began that abandonment of politics by the old governing class which has ended in all Cabinets, conservative no less than progressive, being what were called in the days of that rash statesman Labor Cabinets. Do not misunderstand me. I do not want the old governing class back. It governed so selfishly that the people would have perished if democracy had not swept it out of politics. But evil as it was in many ways, at least it stood above the tyranny of popular ignorance and popular poverty. Today only the King stands above that tyranny. You are dangerously subject to it. In spite of my urgings and remonstrances you have not yet dared to take command of our schools and put a stop to the inculcation upon your unfortunate children of superstitions and prejudices that stand like stone walls across every forward path. Are you, well advised in trying to reduce me to your own slavery to them? If I do not stand above them there is no longer any reason for my existence at all. I stand for the future and the past, for the posterity that has no vote and the tradition that never had any. I stand for the great abstractions for conscience and virtue, for the eternal against the expedient, for the evolutionary appetite against the day's gluttony, for intellectual integrity, for humanity, for the rescue of industry from commercialism and of science from professionalism, for everything that you desire as sincerely as I, but which in you is held in leash by the Press, which can organize against you the ignorance and superstition, the timidity and credulity, the gullibility and prudery, the hating and hunting instinct of the voting mob, and cast you down from power if you utter a word to alarm or displease the adventurers who have the Press in their pockets. Between you and that tyranny stands the throne. I have no elections to fear, and if any newspaper magnate dares offend me, that magnate's fashion-

able wife and marriageable daughters will soon make him understand that the King's displeasure is still a sentence of social death within range of St James's Palace. Think of the things you dare not do! the persons you dare not offend! Well, a King with a little courage may tackle them for you. Responsibilities which would break your backs may still be borne on a King's shoulders. But he must be a king, not a puppet. You would be responsible for a puppet, remember that. But whilst you continue to support me as a separate and independent estate of the realm, I am your scapegoat. You get the credit of all our popular legislation whilst you put the odium of all our resistance to ignorant popular clamor on me. I ask you, before you play your last card and destroy me, to consider where you will be without me. Think once think twice, for your danger is, not that I may defeat you, but that your success is certain if you insist.

LYSISTRATA *Splendid!*

AMANDA You did speak that piece beautifully, sir.

BALBUS [*grumbling*] All very well, but what about my brother-in-law Mike?

LYSISTRATA [*maddened*] Oh, confound your brother-in-law Mike!

BOANERGES *Order! order!*

LYSISTRATA [*to the King*] I beg your pardon, sir, but really—at a moment like this—
[*words fail her*]

MAGNUS [*to Balbus*] If I had not put my foot down, Mr Balbus, the Prime Minister would have been unable to keep your brother-in-law out of the Cabinet.

BALBUS [*aggressively*] And why should he not be in the Cabinet?

AMANDA Booze, my Balby booze. Raising the elbow!

BALBUS [*bullying*] Who says so?

AMANDA. I do, darling.

BALBUS [*subsiding*] Well, perhaps it would surprise you all to know that Mike doesn't drink as much as I do.

AMANDA You carry it better, Bert.

PLINY Mike never knows when to stop.

CRASSUS The time for Mike to stop is before he begins, if you ask me.

LYSISTRATA [*impetuously*] What sort of animals are you—you men? The king puts before us the most serious question of principle we shall ever have to deal with, and off you start discussing whether this drunken wretch

takes honest whisky like Balbus or methylated spirit or petrol or whatever he can lay his hands on when the fit takes him

BALBUS. I agree with that What does it matter what Mike drinks? What does it matter whether he drinks or not? Mike would strengthen the Cabinet because he represents Breakages, Limited, the biggest industrial corporation in the country.

LYSISTRATA [*letting herself go*] Just so! Breakages, Limited! just so! Listen to me, sir; and judge whether I have not reason to feel everything you have just said to the very marrow of my bones. Here am I, the Powermistress Royal. I have to organize and administer all the motor power in the country for the good of the country. I have to harness the winds and the tides, the oils and the coal seams I have to see that every little sewing machine in the Hebrides, every dentist's drill in Shetland, every carpet sweeper in Margate, has its stream of driving power on tap from a switch in the wall as punctually as the great thundering dynamos of our big industrial plants I do it, but it costs twice as much as it should. Why? Because every new invention is bought up and suppressed by Breakages, Limited Every breakdown, every accident, every smash and crash, is a job for them But for them we should have unbreakable glass, unbreakable steel, imperishable materials of all sorts But for them our goods trains could be started and stopped without battering and tearing the vitals out of every wagon and sending it to their repair shops once a week instead of once a year Our national repair bill runs up to hundreds of millions I could name you a dozen inventions within my own term of office which would have effected enormous economies in breakages and breakdowns; but these people can afford to pay an inventor more for his machine or his process or whatever it may be than he could hope to make by a legitimate use of it; and when they have bought it they smother it. When the inventor is poor and not good at defending himself they make bogus trials of his machine and report that it is no use I have been shot at twice by inventors driven crazy by this sort of thing. they blamed me for it—as if I could stand up against this monster with its millions and its newspapers and its fingers in every pie. It is heartbreaking. I love my department.

I dream of nothing but its efficiency. with me it comes before every personal tie every happiness that common women run after I would give my right hand to see these people in the bankruptcy court with half their business abolished and the other half done in public workshops where public losses are not private gains You stand for that, sir, and I would be with you to the last drop of my blood if I dared But what can I do? If I said one word of this in public, not a week would pass in the next two years without an article on the inefficiency and corruption of all Government departments, especially departments managed, like mine, by females They would dig up the very machines they have buried, and make out that it is my fault that they have never been brought into use They would set their private police to watch me day and night to get something against my private character. One of their directors told me to my face that by lifting up his finger he could get my windows broken by the mob, and that Breakages, Limited, would get the job of putting in new glass And it is true. It is infamous, it is outrageous, but if I attempt to fight them I shall be hounded out of public life, and they will shove Mouldy Mike into the Cabinet to run my department in their interests. that is, to make such a failure of it that Joe will have to sell it to Breakages, Limited, at scrap iron prices I—I—oh, it is beyond bearing [*she breaks down*]

There is a troubled silence for a moment Then the voice of the Prime Minister breaks it impressively as he addresses the King.

PROTEUS. You hear that, sir Your one supporter in the Cabinet admits that the industrial situation is too strong for her I do not pretend to be able to control the women in my Cabinet; but not one of them dare support you

AMANDA [*springing up*] Whats that? Not dare! What do you bet that I dont go down to Mouldy Mike's constituency and say everything that Lizzie has said and a lot more too, if I choose? I tell you, Breakages, Limited, never interferes in my department. I'd like to catch them at it

MAIUS I am afraid that that is only because the efficiency of the Post Office is as important to them as to the general public.

AMANDA Stuff! They could get rid of me without shutting up the Post Office They're

afraid of me—of me, Amanda Postlethwaite

MAGNUS You coax them, I am afraid

AMANDA Coax! What do you think they care for coaxing? They can have all the coaxing they want from younger and prettier women than I by paying for it No use trying to coax that lot Intimidate them thats the way to handle them

LYSISTRATA [*her voice still broken*] I wish I could intimidate them

MAGNUS But what can Amanda do that you cannot do?

AMANDA I'll tell you She cant mimic people And she cant sing funny songs I can do both, and that—with all respect, sir—makes me the real queen of England

BOANERGES Oh, come! Disgraceful! Shame!

AMANDA If you provoke me, Bill, I'll drive you out of your constituency inside of two months

BOANERGES Ho! You will, will you? How?

AMANDA Just as I drove the Chairman of Breakages out of my own constituency when he came down there and tried to take my seat from me

MAGNUS I never quite understood why he turned tail How did you do it?

AMANDA I'll tell you He opened his campaign with a great Saturday night speech against me in the Home Lovers' Hall to five thousand people In that same hall a week later, I faced a meeting of the very same people I didnt argue I mimicked him I took all the highfalutin passages in his speech, and repeated them in his best manner until I had the whole five thousand laughing at him Then I asked them would they like me to sing, and their Yes nearly lifted the roof off I had two songs They both had choruses One went "She lets me go out on Saturday night, on Saturday night, on Saturday night"—like that The other went "Boo! Hoo! I want Amanda's Teddy bear to play with" They sang it under the windows of his hotel next time he came He cancelled his meeting and left. And thats how England is governed by yours truly, sir Lucky for England that Queen Amanda is a good sort, in spite of some surface faults [*She resumes her seat with triumphant self-satisfaction*]

BALBUS Lucky for England theres only one of you thats what I say

AMANDA [*wafts him a kiss*!]

MAGNUS Should not the Queen support the King, your Majesty?

AMANDA Sorry, sir, but there isnt room for two monarchs in my realm I am against you on principle because the talent for mimicry isnt hereditary

PROTEUS Now, anybody else? We have heard why the two ladies cannot support the King Is there anybody who can?

Silence

MAGNUS I see that my appeal has been in vain I do not reproach you, ladies and gentlemen, because I perceive that your situation is a difficult one The question is, how to change it

NICOBAR Sign the ultimatum that is how

MAGNUS I am not quite convinced of that The Home Secretary's brother-in-law was quite willing to sign the pledge of total abstinence if I would admit him to the Cabinet His offer was not accepted, because, though none of us doubted that he would sign the pledge, we were not equally certain that the infirmities of his nature would allow him to keep it My nature is also subject to infirmity Are you satisfied, Mr Proteus, that if I sign this ultimatum, I shall not inevitably relapse into the conduct that my nature dictates?

PROTEUS [*his patience strained*] What is the use of going on like this? You are like a man on the scaffold, spinning out his prayers to put off the inevitable execution as long as possible Nothing that you can say will make any difference You know you must sign. Why not sign and have done with it?

NICOBAR Now youre talking, Joe

BALBUS Thats the stuff to give him

FLINY Gulp it down, sir It wont get any sweeter by keeping what?

LYSISTRATA Oh, for God's sake, sign, sir This is torture to me

MAGNUS I perceive, gentlemen, that I have come to the end of your patience I will tax it no further you have been very forbearing, and I thank you for it I will say no more by way of discussion, but I must have until five o'clock this evening to consider my decision At that hour, if I can find no other way out, I will sign without another word. Meanwhile, ladies and gentlemen, au revoir!

He rises All rise He marches out

PROTEUS His last wriggle Never mind we have him safe enough What about lunch? I am starving Will you lunch with me, Lizzie?

LYSISTRATA Dont speak to me [*She rushes out distractedly*]

AMANDA Poor darling Lizzie! She's a regular old true blue Diehard. If only I had her brains and education! or if she had my variety talent! what a queen she'd make! Like old Queen Elizabeth, eh? Dont grieve, Joe I'll lunch with you since youre so pressing

CRASSUS Come and lunch with me—all of you

AMANDA. What opulence! Can you afford it?

CRASSUS Breakages will pay. They have a standing account at the Ritz. Over five thousand a year, it comes to

PROTEUS Right Let us spoil the Egyptians

BOANERGES [*with Roman dignity*] My lunch will cost me one and sixpence, and I shall pay for it myself [*he stalks out*]

AMANDA [*calling after him*] Dont make a beast of yourself, Bill Ta ta!

PROTEUS Come on, come on it's ever so late.

They all hurry out Sempronius and Pamphilus, entering, have to stand aside to let them pass before returning to their desks Proteus, with Amanda on his arm, stops in the doorway on seeing them.

PROTEUS. Have you two been listening, may I ask?

PAMPHILIUS Well, it would be rather inconvenient, wouldnt it, if we had to be told everything that passed?

SEMPRONIUS. Once for all, Mr Proteus, the King's private secretaries must hear everything, see everything, and know everything.

PROTEUS Singularly enough, Mr Sempronius, I havnt the slightest objection [*he goes*]

AMANDA [*going with him*] Goodbye, Semmy So long, Pam

SEMPRONIUS { [*seating themselves at their writing tables and yawning prodigiously*] Ou-ou-ou-ou-ou-fff!!!
PAMPHILIUS.

AN INTERLUDE

Orinthia's boudoir at half-past fifteen on the same day She is at her writing table scribbling notes She is romantically beautiful, and beautifully dressed As the table is against the wall near a corner, with the other wall on her left, her back alone is visible from the middle of the room The door is near the corner diagonally opposite There is a large settee in the middle of the room

The King enters and waits on the threshold

ORINTHIA [*crossly, without looking round*] Who is that?

MAGNUS His Majesty the King

ORINTHIA I dont want to see him.

MAGNUS How soon will you be disengaged?

ORINTHIA I didnt say I was engaged Tell the king I dont want to see him

MAGNUS He awaits your pleasure [*he comes in and seats himself on the settee*]

ORINTHIA Go away [*A pause*] I wont speak to you [*Another pause*] If my private rooms are to be broken into at any moment because they are in the palace, and the king is not a gentleman, I must take a house outside I am writing to the agents about one now

MAGNUS What is our quarrel today, beloved?

ORINTHIA Ask your conscience

MAGNUS. I have none when you are concerned. You must tell me

She takes a book from the table and rises, then sweeps superbly forward to the settee and flings the book into his hands

ORINTHIA There!

MAGNUS What is this?

ORINTHIA Page 16 Look at it

MAGNUS [*looking at the title on the back of the book*] "Songs of our Great Great Grandparents" What page did you say?

ORINTHIA [*between her teeth*] Six-teen.

MAGNUS [*opening the book and finding the page, his eye lighting up with recognition as he looks at it*] Ah! The Pilgrim of Love!

ORINTHIA Read the first three words—if you dare

MAGNUS [*smiling as he caresses the phrase*] "Orinthia, my beloved".

ORINTHIA The name you pretended to invent specially for me, the only woman in the world for you Picked up out of the rubbish basket in a secondhand bookseller's! And I thought you were a poet!

MAGNUS Well, one poet may consecrate a name for another Orinthia is a name full of magic for me. It could not be that if I had invented it myself I heard it at a concert of ancient music when I was a child; and I have treasured it ever since

ORINTHIA You always have a pretty excuse. You are the King of liars and humbugs. You cannot understand how a falsehood like that wounds me

MAGNUS [*remorsefully, stretching out his arms towards her*] Belovéd I am sorry

ORINTHIA Put your hands in your pockets they shall not touch me ever again.

MAGNUS [*obeying*] Dont pretend to be hurt

unless you really are, dearest It wrings my heart

ORINTHIA Since when have you set up a heart? Did you buy that, too, secondhand?

MAGNUS I have something in me that winces when you are hurt—or pretend to be

ORINTHIA [*contemptuously*] Yes I have only to squeal, and you will take me up and pet me as you would a puppy run over by a car [*Sitting down beside him, but beyond arm's length*] That is what you give me when my heart demands love I had rather you kicked me

MAGNUS I should like to kick you sometimes, when you are specially aggravating But I shouldn't do it well I should be afraid of hurting you all the time

ORINTHIA I believe you would sign my death warrant without turning a hair

MAGNUS That is true, in a way It is wonderful how subtle your mind is, as far as it goes

ORINTHIA It does not go as far as yours, I suppose

MAGNUS I don't know Our minds go together half way Whether it is that your mind stops there or else that the road forks, and you take the high road and I take the low road, I cannot say, but somehow after a certain point we lose one another

ORINTHIA And then you go back to your Amandas and Lysistratas creatures whose idea of romance is a minister in love with a department, and whose bedside books are blue books

MAGNUS They are not always thinking of some man or other That is a rather desirable extension of their interests, in my opinion If Lysistrata had a lover I should not be interested in him in the least, and she would bore me to distraction if she could talk of nothing else But I am very much interested in her department Her devotion to it gives us a topic of endless interest.

ORINTHIA Well, go to her I am not detaining you But don't tell her that I have nothing to talk about but men for that is a lie, and you know it

MAGNUS It is, as you say, a lie, and I know it But I did not say it

ORINTHIA You implied it You meant it When those ridiculous political women are with us you talk to them all the time, and never say a word to me

MAGNUS Nor you to me We cannot talk

to one another in public we have nothing to say that could be said before other people Yet we find enough to say to one another when we are alone together Would you change that if you could?

ORINTHIA You are as slippery as an eel, but you shall not slip through my fingers Why do you surround yourself with political bores and frumps and dowdy busybodies who can't talk they can only debate about their dull departments and their fads and their election chances [*Rising impatiently*] Who could talk to such people? If it were not for the non-entities of wives and husbands they drag about with them, there would be nobody to talk to at all And even they can talk of nothing but the servants and the baby [*Suddenly returning to her seat*] Listen to me, Magnus Why can you not be a real king?

MAGNUS In what way, belovedest?

ORINTHIA Send all these stupid people packing Make them do their drudgeries in their departments without bothering you about it, as you make your servants here sweep the floors and dust the furniture Live a really noble and beautiful life—a kingly life—with me What you need to make you a real king is a real queen.

MAGNUS But I have got one

ORINTHIA Oh, you are blind You are worse than blind you have low tastes Heaven is offering you a rose, and you cling to a cabbage

MAGNUS [*laughing*] That is a very apt metaphor, beloved But what wise man, if you force him to choose between doing without roses and doing without cabbages, would not secure the cabbages? Besides, all these old married cabbages were once roses, and, though young things like you don't remember that, their husbands do They don't notice the change Besides, you should know better than anyone else that when a man gets tired of his wife and leaves her it is never because she has lost her good looks The new love is often older and uglier than the old

ORINTHIA Why should I know it better than anyone else?

MAGNUS Why, because you have been married twice, and both your husbands have run away from you to much plainer and stupider women When I begged your present husband to come back to court for a while for the sake of appearances he said no man could call his soul his own in the same

house with you And yet that man was utterly infatuated with your beauty when he married you Your first husband actually forced a good wife to divorce him so that he might marry you; but before two years were out he went back to her and died in her arms, poor chap.

ORINTHIA Shall I tell you why these men could not live with me? It was because I am a thoroughbred, and they are only hacks They had nothing against me. I was perfectly faithful to them I kept their houses beautifully. I fed them better than they had ever been fed in their lives But because I was higher than they were, and greater, they could not stand the strain of trying to live up to me So I let them go their way, poor wretches, back to their cabbages Look at the old creature Ignatius is living with now! She gives you his real measure

MAGNUS An excellent woman Ignatius is quite happy with her I never saw a man so changed

ORINTHIA Just what he is fit for. Common-place Bourgeoise She trots through the streets shopping [*Rising*] I tread the plains of Heaven. Common women cannot come where I am, and common men find themselves out and slink away.

MAGNUS It must be magnificent to have the consciousness of a goddess without ever doing a thing to justify it

ORINTHIA Give me a goddess's work to do, and I will do it I will even stoop to a queen's work if you will share the throne with me But do not pretend that people become great by doing great things They do great things because they are great, if the great things come along But they are great just the same when the great things do not come along If I never did anything but sit in this room and powder my face and tell you what a clever fool you are, I should still be heavens high above the millions of common women who do their domestic duty, and sacrifice themselves, and run Trade departments and all the rest of the vulgarities Has all the tedious public work you have done made you any the better? I have seen you before and after your boasted strokes of policy; and you were the same man, and would have been the same man to me and to yourself if you had never done them. Thank God my self-consciousness is something nobler than vulgar conceit in having done something. It is what I am, not

what I do, that you must worship in me. If you want deeds, go to your men and women of action, as you call them, who are all in a conspiracy to pretend that the mechanical things they do, the foolhardy way they risk their worthless lives, or their getting up in the morning at four and working sixteen hours a day for thirty years, like coral insects, make them great. What are they for? these dull slaves? To keep the streets swept for me. To enable me to reign over them in beauty like the stars without having anything to do with their slavery except to console it, to dazzle it, to enable them to forget it in adoring dreams of me Am I not worth it? [*She sits, fascinating him*] Look into my eyes and tell the truth Am I worth it or not?

MAGNUS To me, who love beauty, yes But you should hear the speeches Balbus makes about your pension

ORINTHIA And my debts do not forget my debts, my mortgages, the bill of sale on my furniture, the thousands I have had from the moneylenders to save me from being sold up because I will not borrow from my friends Lecture me again about them; but do not dare pretend that the people grudge me my pension They glory in it, and in my extravagance, as you call it

MAGNUS [*more gravely*] By the way, Orinthia, when your dressmakers took up that last bill for you, they were speculating, were they not, in your chances of becoming my queen some day?

ORINTHIA Well, what if they were?

MAGNUS They would hardly have ventured on that without a hint from somebody Was it from you?

ORINTHIA You think me capable of that! You have a very low side to you, Magnus.

MAGNUS No doubt like other mortal fabrics I have a wrong side and a right side But it is no use your giving yourself airs, belovedest You are capable of anything Do you deny that there was some suggestion of the kind?

ORINTHIA How dare you challenge me to deny it? I never deny. Of course there was a suggestion of the kind

MAGNUS. I thought so

ORINTHIA. Oh, stupid! stupid! Go keep a grocer's shop that is what you are fit for. Do you suppose that the suggestion came from me? Why, you great oaf, it is in the air when my dressmaker hinted at it I told her that if she ever dared to repeat such a thing

she should never get another order from me But can I help people seeing what is as plain as the sun in the heavens? [*Rising again*] Everyone knows that I am the real queen Everyone treats me as the real queen They cheer me in the streets When I open one of the art exhibitions or launch a new ship they crowd the place out I am one of Nature's queens, and they know it If you do not, you are not one of Nature's kings

MAGNUS Sublime! Nothing but genuine inspiration could give a woman such cheek

ORINTHIA Yes inspiration, not cheek [*Sitting as before*] Magnus when are you going to face my destiny, and your own?

MAGNUS But my wife? the queen? What is to become of my poor dear Jemima?

ORINTHIA. Oh, drown her shoot her tell your chauffeur to drive her into the Serpentine and leave her there The woman makes you ridiculous

MAGNUS I don't think I should like that And the public would think it ill-natured

ORINTHIA. Oh, you know what I mean. Divorce her Make her divorce you It is quite easy That was how Ronny married me Everybody does it when they need a change

MAGNUS But I can't imagine what I should do without Jemima.

ORINTHIA. Nobody else can imagine what you do with her But you need not do without her You can see as much of her as you like when we are married I shall not be jealous and make scenes

MAGNUS That is very magnanimous of you But I am afraid it does not settle the difficulty Jemima would not think it right to keep up her present intimacy with me if I were married to you

ORINTHIA What a woman! Would she be in any worse position than I am in now?

MAGNUS No

ORINTHIA You mean, then, that you do not mind placing me in a position that you do not think good enough for her?

MAGNUS Orinthia I did not place you in your present position You placed yourself in it I could not resist you. You gathered me like a daisy

ORINTHIA Did you want to resist me?

MAGNUS Oh no I never resist temptation, because I have found that things that are bad for me do not tempt me

ORINTHIA. Well, then, what are we talking about?

MAGNUS I forget I think I was explaining the impossibility of my wife changing places with you

ORINTHIA Why impossible, pray?

MAGNUS I cannot make you understand: you see you have never been really married, though you have led two captives to the altar, and borne children to one of them. Being your husband is only a job for which one man will do as well as another, and which the last man holds subject to six months notice in the divorce court Being my wife is something quite different The smallest derogation to Jemima's dignity would hit me like the lash of a whip across the face. About yours, somehow, I do not care a rap

ORINTHIA Nothing can derogate from my dignity it is divine Hers is only a convention that is why you tremble when it is challenged

MAGNUS Not a bit It is because she is a part of my real workaday self You belong to fairyland

ORINTHIA. Suppose she dies! Will you die too?

MAGNUS Not immediately I shall have to carry on as best I can without her, though the prospect terrifies me

ORINTHIA Might not carrying on without her include marrying me?

MAGNUS My dear Orinthia, I had rather marry the devil Being a wife is not your job

ORINTHIA You think so because you have no imagination And you don't know me because I have never let you really possess me I should make you more happy than any man has ever yet been on earth

MAGNUS I defy you to make me more happy than our strangely innocent relations have already made me

ORINTHIA [*rising restlessly*] You talk like a child or a saint [*Turning on him*] I can give you a new life one of which you have no conception I can give you beautiful, wonderful children have you ever seen a lovelier boy than my Basil?

MAGNUS Your children are beautiful, but they are fairy children, and I have several very real ones already A divorce would not sweep them out of the way of the faines

ORINTHIA. In short, when your golden moment comes—when the gates of heaven open before you, you are afraid to come out of your pigsty

MAGNUS If I am a pig, a pigsty is the

proper place for me

ORINTHIA. I cannot understand it All men are fools and moral cowards when you come to know them But you are less of a fool and less of a moral coward than any man I have ever known You have almost the makings of a first rate woman in you When I leave the earth and soar up to the regions which are my real eternal home, you can follow me. I can speak to you as I can speak to no one else; and you can say things to me that would just make your stupid wife cry. There is more of you in me than of any other man within my reach There is more of me in you than of any other woman within your reach We are meant for one another, it is written across the sky that you and I are queen and king How can you hesitate? What attraction is there for you in your common healthy jolly lumps of children and your common housekeeper wife and the rabble of dowdies and upstarts and intriguers and clowns that think they are governing the country when they are only squabbling with you? Look again at me, man, again and again Am I not worth a million such? Is not life with me as high above them as the sun is above the gutter?

MAGNUS Yes yes yes yes, of course You are lovely you are divine [*she cannot restrain a gesture of triumph*] And you are enormously amusing

This anti-climax is too much for Orinthia's exaltation, but she is too clever not to appreciate it With another gesture, this time of deflation, she sits down at his left hand with an air of suffering patience, and listens in silence to the harangue which follows

MAGNUS Some day perhaps Nature will graft the roses on the cabbages and make every woman as enchanting as you; and then what a glorious lark life will be! But at present, what I come here for is to enjoy talking to you like this when I need an hour's respite from royalty when my stupid wife has been worrying me, or my jolly lumps of children bothering me, or my turbulent Cabinet obstructing me when, as the doctors say, what I need is a change You see, my dear, there is no wife on earth so precious, no children so jolly, no Cabinet so tactful that it is impossible ever to get tired of them Jemima has her limitations, as you have observed And I have mine. Now if our limitations exactly corresponded I should

never want to talk to anyone else; and neither would she But as that never happens, we are like all other married couples that is, there are subjects which can never be discussed between us because they are sore subjects. There are people we avoid mentioning to one another because one of us likes them and the other doesn't Not only individuals, but whole sorts of people For instance, your sort. My wife doesn't like your sort, doesn't understand it, mistrusts and dreads it Not without reason; for women like you are dangerous to wives But I don't dislike your sort I understand it, being a little in that line myself. At all events I am not afraid of it; though the least allusion to it brings a cloud over my wife's face So when I want to talk freely about it I come and talk to you And I take it she talks to friends of hers about people of whom she never talks to me She has men friends from whom she can get some things that she cannot get from me. If she didn't do so she would be limited by my limitations, which would end in her hating me So I always do my best to make her men friends feel at home with us

ORINTHIA A model husband in a model household! And when the model household becomes a bore, I am the diversion

MAGNUS Well, what more can you ask? Do not let us fall into the common mistake of expecting to become one flesh and one spirit Every star has its own orbit; and between it and its nearest neighbor there is not only a powerful attraction but an infinite distance When the attraction becomes stronger than the distance the two do not embrace they crash together in ruin. We two also have our orbits, and must keep an infinite distance between us to avoid a disastrous collision Keeping our distance is the whole secret of good manners; and without good manners human society is intolerable and impossible.

ORINTHIA Would any other woman stand your sermons, and even like them?

MAGNUS Orinthia we are only two children at play, and you must be content to be my queen in fairyland And [*rising*] I must go back to my work.

ORINTHIA. What work have you that is more important than being with me?

MAGNUS. None.

ORINTHIA Then sit down.

MAGNUS Unfortunately, this silly business of government must be carried on. And there

is a crisis this evening, as usual

ORINTHIA But the crisis is not until five I heard all about it from Sempronius Why do you encourage that greedy schemer Proteus? He humbugs you He humbugs everybody He even humbugs himself, and of course he humbugs that Cabinet which is a disgrace to you it is like an overcrowded third class carriage Why do you allow such riffraff to waste your time? After all, what are you paid for? To be a king that is, to wipe your boots on common people

MAGNUS Yes, but this king business, as the Americans call it, has got itself so mixed up with democracy that half the country expects me to wipe my perfectly polished boots on the Cabinet, and the other half expects me to let the Cabinet wipe its muddy boots on me The Crisis at five o'clock is to decide which of us is to be the doormat

ORINTHIA And you will condescend to fight with Proteus for power?

MAGNUS Oh no I never fight But I sometimes win

ORINTHIA If you let yourself be beaten by that trickster and poseur, never dare to approach me again

MAGNUS Proteus is a clever fellow even on occasion a fine fellow It would give me no satisfaction to beat him I hate beating people But there would be some innocent fun in outwitting him

ORINTHIA Magnus you are a mollicoddle If you were a real man you would just delight in beating him to a jelly

MAGNUS A real man would never do as a king I am only an idol, my love, and all I can do is to draw the line at being a cruel idol *[He looks at his watch]* Now I must really be off Au revoir

ORINTHIA *[looking at her wrist watch]* But it is only twentyfive minutes past four You have heaps of time before five

MAGNUS Yes, but tea is at half-past four

ORINTHIA *[catching him by the arm with a snakelike dart]* Never mind your tea I will give you your tea

MAGNUS Impossible, beloved Jemima does not like to be kept waiting

ORINTHIA Oh, bother Jemima! You shall not leave me to go to Jemima *[she pulls him back so vigorously that he falls into the seat beside her]*

MAGNUS My dear, I must

ORINTHIA No, not today Listen, Magnus

I have something very particular to say to you

MAGNUS You have not You are only trying to make me late to annoy my wife *[He tries to rise, but is pulled back]* Let me go, please

ORINTHIA *[holding on]* Why are you so afraid of your wife? You are the laughing stock of London, you poor henpecked darling

MAGNUS Henpecked! What do you call this? At least my wife does not restrain me by bodily violence

ORINTHIA I will not be deserted for your old Dutch

MAGNUS Listen, Orinthia Dont be absurd. You know I must go Do be good

ORINTHIA Only ten minutes more

MAGNUS It is half-past already

He tries to rise, but she holds him back

MAGNUS *[pausing for breath]* You are doing this out of sheer devilment You are so abominably strong that I cannot break loose without hurting you Must I call the guard?

ORINTHIA Do, do It will be in all the papers tomorrow

MAGNUS Fiend *[Summoning all his dignity]* Orinthia I command you

ORINTHIA *[laughs wildly]*!"

MAGNUS *[furious]* Very well, then, you she devil you shall let go

He tackles her in earnest She flings her arms round him and holds on with mischievous enjoyment There is a tapping at the door, but they do not hear it As he is breaking loose she suddenly shifts her grip to his waist and drags him on to the floor, where they roll over one another Sempronius enters He stares at the scandalous scene for a moment, then hastily slips out, shuts the door, clears his throat and blows his nose noisily, and knocks loudly and repeatedly The two combatants cease hostilities and scramble hastily to their feet

MAGNUS Come in.

SEMPRONIUS *[entering]* Her Majesty sent me to remind you that tea is waiting, sir

MAGNUS Thank you *[He goes quickly out]*

ORINTHIA *[panting but greatly pleased with herself]* The King forgets everything when he is here So do I, I am afraid I am so sorry

SEMPRONIUS *[stiffly]* No explanations are needed. I saw what happened *[He goes out]*

ORINTHIA The beast! He must have looked through the keyhole *[She throws her hand up with a gesture of laughing defiance, and dances back to her seat at the writing table]*

ACT II

Later in the afternoon The Terrace of the Palace. A low balustrade separates it from the lawn. Terrace chairs in abundance, ranged along the balustrade. Some dining room chairs also, not ranged, but standing about as if they had just been occupied. The terrace is accessible from the lawn by a central flight of steps.

The King and Queen are sitting apart near the corners of the steps, the Queen to the King's right. He is reading the evening paper, she is knitting. She has a little work table on her right, with a small gong on it.

THE QUEEN Why did you tell them to leave the chairs when they took away the tea?

MAGNUS I shall receive the Cabinet here

THE QUEEN Here! Why?

MAGNUS Well, I think the open air and the evening light will have a quieting effect on them. They cannot make speeches at me so easily as in a room.

THE QUEEN Are you sure? When Robert asked Boanerges where he learnt to speak so beautifully, he said "In Hyde Park."

MAGNUS Yes; but with a crowd to stimulate him

THE QUEEN Robert says you have tamed Boanerges

MAGNUS. No. I have not tamed him. I have taught him how to behave. I have to valet all the beginners, but that does not tame them. It teaches them how to use their strength instead of wasting it in making fools of themselves. So much the worse for me when I have to fight them.

THE QUEEN You get no thanks for it. They think you are only humbugging them.

MAGNUS. Well, so I am, in the elementary lessons. But when it comes to real business humbug is no use. They pick it up themselves too quickly.

Pamphilus enters along the terrace, from the Queen's side.

MAGNUS [looking at his watch] Good Heavens! They havnt come, have they? It's not five yet.

PAMPHILIUS No, sir. It's the American ambassador.

THE QUEEN [resenting this a little] Has he an audience?

PAMPHILIUS No, maam. He is rather excited about something, I think. I cant get anything out of him. He says he must see His Majesty at once.

THE QUEEN Must! An American must see

the King at once, without an audience! Well!

MAGNUS [rising] Send him in, Pam.

Pamphilus goes out.

THE QUEEN I should have told him to write for an audience, and then kept him waiting a week for it.

MAGNUS What! When we still owe America that old war debt. And with a mad imperialist president like Bossfield! No you wouldnt, my dear. You would be crawlingly civil to him, as I am going to be, confound him!

PAMPHILIUS [re-appearing] His Excellency the American Ambassador Mr Vanhatten.

He retires as Mr Vanhatten enters in an effusive condition, and, like a man assured of an enthusiastic welcome, hurries to the Queen, and salutes her with a handshake so prolonged that she stares in astonishment, first at him, and then appealingly at the King, with her hands being vigorously wrung and waved up and down all the time.

MAGNUS. What on earth is the matter, Mr Vanhatten? You are shaking Her Majesty's rings off.

VANHATTAN [desisting] Her Majesty will excuse me when she learns the nature of my errand here. This, King Magnus, is a great historic scene. One of the greatest, perhaps, that history has ever recorded or will ever again record.

MAGNUS Have you had tea?

VANHATTAN Tea! Who can think of tea at such a moment as this?

THE QUEEN [rather coldly] It is hard for us to share your enthusiasm in complete ignorance of its cause.

VANHATTAN. That is true, maam. I am just behaving like a crazy man. But you shall hear. You shall judge. And then you shall say whether I exaggerate the importance—the immensity—of an occasion that cannot be exaggerated.

MAGNUS. Goodness gracious! Wont you sit down?

VANHATTAN [taking a chair and placing it between them] I thank your Majesty [He sits].

MAGNUS You have some exciting news for us, apparently. Is it private or official?

VANHATTAN Official, sir. No mistake about it. What I am going to tell you is authentic from the United States of America to the British Empire.

THE QUEEN Perhaps I had better go.

VANHATTAN. No, maam: you shall not go. Whatever may be the limits of your privileges

as the consort of your sovereign, it is your right as an Englishwoman to learn what I have come here to communicate

MAGNUS My dear Vanhatten, what the devil is the matter?

VANHATTAN King Magnus between your country and mine there is a debt

MAGNUS Does that matter, now that our capitalists have invested so heavily in American concerns that after paying yourselves the interest on the debt you have to send us two thousand million dollars a year to balance the account

VANHATTAN King Magnus for the moment, forget figures Between your country and mine there is not only a debt but a frontier the frontier that has on it not a single gun nor a single soldier, and across which the American citizen every day shakes the hand of the Canadian subject of your throne

MAGNUS There is also the frontier of the ocean, which is somewhat more expensively defended at our joint expense by the League of Nations

VANHATTAN [*rising to give his words more impressiveness*] Sir the debt is cancelled The frontier no longer exists

THE QUEEN How can that be?

MAGNUS Am I to understand, Mr Vanhatten, that by some convulsion of Nature the continent of North America has been submerged in the Atlantic?

VANHATTAN Something even more wonderful than that has happened One may say that the Atlantic Ocean has been submerged in the British Empire

MAGNUS I think you had better tell us as succinctly as possible what has happened Pray sit down

VANHATTAN [*resuming his seat*] You are aware, sir, that the United States of America at one time formed a part of your empire

MAGNUS There is a tradition to that effect

VANHATTAN No mere tradition, sir An undoubted historical fact In the eighteenth century—

MAGNUS That is a long time ago

VANHATTAN Centuries count for but little in the lifetimes of great nations, sir Let me recall the parable of the prodigal son

MAGNUS Oh really, Mr Vanhatten, that was a very very long time ago I take it that something important has happened since yesterday

VANHATTAN It has It has indeed, King

Magnus

MAGNUS Then what is it? I have not time to attend to the eighteenth century and the prodigal son at this moment.

THE QUEEN The King has a Cabinet meeting in ten minutes, Mr Vanhatten

VANHATTAN I should like to see the faces of your Cabinet ministers, King Magnus, when they hear what I have to tell you

MAGNUS So should I But I am not in a position to tell it to them, because I don't know what it is

VANHATTAN The prodigal, sir, has returned to his father's house Not poor, not hungry, not ragged, as of old Oh no. This time he returns bringing with him the riches of the earth to the ancestral home

MAGNUS [*starting from his chair*] You don't mean to say—

VANHATTAN [*rising also, blandly triumphant*] I do, sir The Declaration of Independence is cancelled The treaties which endorsed it are torn up. We have decided to rejoin the British Empire We shall of course enjoy Dominion Home Rule under the Presidency of Mr Bossfield I shall revisit you here shortly, not as the Ambassador of a foreign power, but as High Commissioner for the greatest of your dominions, and your very loyal and devoted subject, sir

MAGNUS [*collapsing into his chair*] The devil you will! [*He stares haggardly into futurity, now for the first time utterly at a loss*]

THE QUEEN What a splendid thing, Mr Vanhatten!

VANHATTAN I thought your Majesty would say so The most splendid thing that has ever happened. [*He resumes his seat*]

THE QUEEN [*looking anxiously at the king*] Don't you think so, Magnus?

MAGNUS [*pulling himself together with a visible effort*] May I ask, Mr Vanhatten, with whom did this—this—this masterstroke of American policy originate? Frankly, I have been accustomed to regard your President as a statesman whose mouth was the most efficient part of his head He cannot have thought of this himself Who suggested it to him?

VANHATTAN I must accept your criticism of Mr Bossfield with all due reserve, but I may mention that we Americans will probably connect the good news with the recent visit to our shores of the President of the Irish Free State I cannot pronounce his

name in its official Gaelic form; and there is only one typist in our bureau who can spell it, but he is known to his friends as Mick O'Rafferty

MAGNUS The rascal! Jemima we shall have to live in Dublin This is the end of England

VANHATTAN In a sense that may be so But England will not perish She will merge—merge, sir—into a bigger and brighter concern Perhaps I should have mentioned that one of our conditions will be that you shall be Emperor King may be good enough for this little island, but if we come in we shall require something grander.

MAGNUS. This little island! "This little gem set in a silver sea!" Has it occurred to you, Mr Vanhatten, that rather than be reduced to a mere appendage of a big American concern, we might raise the old warcry of Sinn Féin, and fight for our independence to the last drop of our blood?

VANHATTAN. I should be right sorry to contemplate such a reversion to a barbarous past Fortunately, it's impossible—impossible. The old warcry would not appeal to the cosmopolitan crews of the fleet of the League of Nations in the Atlantic That fleet would blockade you, sir And I fear we should be obliged to boycott you The two thousand million dollars a year would stop

MAGNUS But the continental Powers! Do you suppose they would consent for a moment to such a change in the balance of power?

VANHATTAN Why not? The change would be only nominal

MAGNUS Nominal! You call an amalgamation of the British Commonwealth with the United States a nominal change! What will France and Germany call it?

VANHATTAN [*shaking his head indulgently*] France and Germany? These queer old geographical expressions which you use here from old family habit do not trouble us. I suppose you mean by Germany the chain of more or less Soviet Republics between the Ural Mountains and the North Sea. Well, the clever people at Moscow and Berlin and Geneva are trying to federate them; and it is fully understood between us that if we don't object to their move they will not object to ours France, by which I take it you mean the Government at New Timgad, is too busy in Africa to fuss about what is happening at the ends of your little Channel

Tube. So long as Paris is full of Americans, and Americans are full of money, all's well in the west from the French point of view One of the great attractions of Paris for Americans is the excursion to Old England The French want us to feel at home here And so we do Why shouldn't we? After all, we are at home here

MAGNUS In what sense, may I ask?

VANHATTAN Well, we find here everything we are accustomed to. our industrial products, our books, our plays, our sports, our Christian Science churches, our osteopaths, our movies and talkies Put it in a small parcel and say our goods and our ideas A political union with us will be just the official recognition of an already accomplished fact A union of hearts, you might call it.

THE QUEEN You forget, Mr Vanhatten We have a great national tradition

VANHATTAN The United States, ma'am, have absorbed all the great national traditions, and blended them with their own glorious tradition of Freedom into something that is unique and universal

THE QUEEN We have a civilized culture which is peculiar to ourselves It may not be better than yours; but it is different.

VANHATTAN Well, is it? We found that culture enshrined in British material works of art in the stately country homes of your nobility, in the cathedrals our common forefathers built as the country houses of God. What did you do with them? You sold them to us. I was brought up in the shade of Ely cathedral, the removal of which from the county of Cambridge to New Jersey was my dear old father's first big professional job The building which stands on its former site is a very fine one in my opinion the best example of reinforced concrete of its period; but it was designed by an American architect, and built by the Synthetic Building Materials Trust, an international affair Believe me, the English people, the real English people who take things as they come instead of reading books about them, will be more at home with us than they are with the old English notions which our tourists try to keep alive When you find some country gentleman keeping up the old English customs at Christmas and so forth, who is he? An American who has bought the place. Your people get up the show for him because he pays for it, not because it is natural to

them

THE QUEEN [*with a sigh*] Our own best families go so much to Ireland nowadays People should not be allowed to go from England to Ireland They never come back

VANHATTAN Well, can you blame them, maam? Look at the climate!

THE QUEEN No it is not the climate It is the Horse Show

The King rises very thoughtfully, and Vanhatten follows his example

MAGNUS I must think over this I have known for years past that it was on the cards When I was young, and under the influence of our family tradition, which of course never recognized the rebellion of the American colonies as valid, I actually dreamt of a reunited English speaking empire at the head of civilization

VANHATTAN Fine! Great! And now come true

MAGNUS Not yet Now that I am older and wiser I find the reality less attractive than the dream

VANHATTAN And is that all I am to report to the President, sir? He will be disappointed I am a little taken aback, myself

MAGNUS For the present, that is all This may be a great idea—

VANHATTAN Surely, surely

MAGNUS It may also be a trap in which England will perish

VANHATTAN [*encouragingly*] Oh, I shouldn't look at it that way Besides, nothing—not even dear old England—can last for ever Progress, you know, sir, progress, progress!

MAGNUS Just so, just so We may survive only as another star on your flag Still, we cling to the little scrap of individuality you have left us If we must merge, as you call it—or did you say submerge?—some of us will swim to the last [*To the Queen*] My dear

The Queen strikes her gong.

Pamphilius returns

MAGNUS You shall hear from me after the Cabinet meets Not tonight you must not sit up waiting for a message Early tomorrow, I hope Thank you for bringing me the news before the papers got it that seldom happens now Pamphilius you will reconduct his Excellency Good evening. [*He shakes hands*]

VANHATTAN I thank your Majesty [*To the Queen*] Good evening, maam I look forward to presenting myself in court dress soon.

THE QUEEN You will look very nice in it, Mr Vanhatten. Good evening

The Ambassador goes out with Pamphilius

MAGNUS [*striding grimly to and fro*] The scoundrels! That blackguard O'Rafferty! That booby bullroarer Bossfield! Breakages, Limited, have taken it into their heads to mend the British Commonwealth

THE QUEEN [*quietly*] I think it is a very good thing You will make a very good emperor We shall civilize these Americans

MAGNUS How can we when we have not yet civilized ourselves? They have come to regard us as a mere tribe of redskins England will be just a reservation

THE QUEEN Nonsense, dear! They know that we are their natural superiors You can see it by the way their women behave at court They really love and reverence royalty, while our English peeresses are hardly civil—when they condescend to come at all

MAGNUS Well, my dear, I do many things to please you that I should never do to please myself, and I suppose I shall end as American Emperor just to keep you amused

THE QUEEN I never desire anything that is not good for you, Magnus You do not always know what is good for you

MAGNUS Well, well, well, well! Have it your own way, dearest Where are these infernal ministers? They're late

THE QUEEN [*looking out into the garden*] Coming across the lawn with Sempronius

The Cabinet arrives The men take off their hats as they come up the steps Boanerges has taken advantage of the interval to procure a brilliant uniform and change into it Proteus, with Sempronius, heads the procession, followed immediately by the two lady ministers The Queen rises as Proteus turns to her Sempronius moves the little table quickly back to the balustrade out of the way, and puts the Queen's chair in the centre for the King

THE QUEEN [*shaking hands*] How do you do, Mr Proteus?

PROTEUS. May I present the President of the Board of Trade, Mr Boanerges?

THE QUEEN I remember seeing you, Mr Boanerges, at the opening of the Transport Workers' Summer Palace You wore a most becoming costume then. I hope you have not given it up

BOANERGES But the Princess told me I looked ridiculous in it!

THE QUEEN That was very naughty of the

Princess. You looked particularly well in it. However, you look well in anything. And now I leave you all to your labors.

She goes out along the terrace. Sempronius follows with her knitting.

MAGNUS [*sitting down*] Be seated, ladies and gentlemen.

They take chairs of one sort or another where they can find them, first leaving their hats on the balustrade. When they are seated, their order from the King's right to his left is Nicobar, Crassus, Boanerges, Amanda, the King, Proteus, Lysistrata, Pliny, and Balbus.

A pause, Proteus waiting for the King to begin. He, deep in thought, says nothing. The silence becomes oppressive.

PLINY [*chattily*] Nice weather we're having, these evenings.

AMANDA [*splutters*]!!!

MAGNUS There is rather a threatening cloud on the western horizon, Mr Pliny [*To Proteus*] Have you heard the news from America?

PROTEUS I have, sir.

MAGNUS Am I to be favored with the advice of my ministers on that subject?

PROTEUS By your Majesty's leave, we will take the question of the ultimatum first.

MAGNUS Do you think the ultimatum will matter much when the capital of the British Commonwealth is shifted to Washington?

NICOBAR We'll see it shifted to Melbourne or Montreal or Johannesburg first.

MAGNUS. It would not stay there. It will stay at a real centre of gravity only.

PROTEUS We are agreed about that. If it shifts at all it will shift either west to Washington or east to Moscow.

BOANERGES Moscow thinks a lot of itself. But what has Moscow to teach us that we cannot teach ourselves? Moscow is built on English history, written in London by Karl Marx.

PROTEUS Yes, and the English king has sidetracked you again [*To Magnus*] What about the ultimatum, sir? You promised us your decision at five o'clock. It is now a quarter past.

MAGNUS Are you inexorably determined to force this issue to its logical end? You know how unEnglish it is to do that?

PROTEUS My people came from Scotland.

LYSISTRATA I wish they had stayed there. I am English—every bone in my body.

BOANERGES [*vociferously*] Same here!

PROTEUS God help England if she had no Scots to think for her!

MAGNUS What does the Cabinet say to that?

AMANDA All their people came from Scotland or Ireland or Wales or Jerusalem or somewhere, sir. It is no use appealing to English sentiment here.

CRASSUS Politics are not suited to the English, if you ask me.

MAGNUS Then I, the only Englishman left in politics, apparently, am to be reduced to complete nullity?

PROTEUS [*bluntly*] Yes. You cannot frighten us out of our position by painting it red. I could paint your position black if I liked. In plain terms we require from you an unconditional surrender. If you refuse it then I go to the country on the question whether England is to be an absolute monarchy or a constitutional one. We are all agreed on that there will be no resignations. I have letters from the absent members of the Government those present will speak for themselves.

ALL THE OTHER MEN Agreed, agreed.

PROTEUS Now, what is your answer?

MAGNUS. The day for absolute monarchies is past. You think you can do without me; and I know that I cannot do without you. I decide, of course, in favor of a constitutional monarchy.

THE MEN [*greatly relieved and delighted*] Hear! hear!

MAGNUS Wait a moment.

Sudden silence and mistrust.

PROTEUS So! There is a catch in it, is there?

MAGNUS Not exactly a catch. But you have driven me to face the fact that I am unfitted to be a constitutional monarch. I am by nature incapable of the necessary self-effacement.

AMANDA Well, that's true, at all events. You and I are a pair, sir.

MAGNUS. Thank you. Therefore, whilst accepting your constitutional principle without the slightest reserve, I cannot sign your ultimatum, because by doing so I should be making personal promises which I know I should break—which in fact I must break because I have forces within me which your constitutional limits cannot hold in check.

BALBUS How can you accept our principle if you don't sign the ultimatum?

MAGNUS. Oh, there is no difficulty about that. When an honest man finds himself in-

capable of discharging the duties of a public post, he resigns

PROTEUS [*alarmed*] Resigns! What are you driving at?

CRASSUS A king cannot resign

NICOBAR You might as well talk of beheading yourself You cant behead yourself

BOANERGES Other people can, though

MAGNUS Do not let us quarrel about words, gentlemen I cannot resign But I can abdicate ALL THE REST [*starting to their feet*] Abdicate! [*They stare at him in consternation*]

AMANDA [*whistling a descending minor scale very expressively*]!!!!!! [*She sits down*]

MAGNUS Of course, abdicate Lysistrata you have been a teacher of history You can assure your colleagues that there is nothing unprecedented in an abdication The Emperor Charles the Fifth, for instance—

LYSISTRATA Oh, Charles the Fifth be—be bothered! he's not good enough Sir I have stood by you as far as I dared Dont throw me over. You must not abdicate [*She sits down, distressed*]

PROTEUS You cannot abdicate except by my advice

MAGNUS I am acting upon your advice

PROTEUS Nonsense! [*He sits down*]

BALBUS Ridiculous! [*He sits down*]

PLINY Youre not serious, you know [*He sits down*]

NICOBAR You cant upset the apple cart like this [*He sits down*]

CRASSUS I must say this is not playing the game [*He sits down*]

BOANERGES [*powerfully*] Well, why not? Why not? Though as an old Republican I have no respect for His Majesty as a King, I have a great respect for him as a Strong Man But he is not the only pebble on the beach Why not have done with this superstition of monarchy, and bring the British Commonwealth into line with all the other great Powers today as a republic? [*He sits down*]

MAGNUS My abdication does not involve that, Mr Boanerges I am abdicating to save the monarchy, not to destroy it. I shall be succeeded by my son Robert, Prince of Wales He will make an admirable constitutional monarch.

PLINY Oh, come! Dont be hard on the lad, sir He has plenty of brains

MAGNUS Oh yes, yes, yes I did not mean that he is a nonentity quite the contrary he

is much cleverer than I am But I have never been able to induce him to take any interest in parliamentary politics He prefers intellectual pursuits

NICOBAR Dont you believe it He is up to his neck in business

MAGNUS Just so He asks me why I waste my time with you here pretending to govern the country when it is really governed by Breakages, Limited And really I hardly know how to answer him

CRASSUS Things are like that nowadays My son says just the same

LYSISTRATA Personally I get on very well with the Prince, but somehow I do not feel that he is interested in what I am doing

BALBUS He isnt He wont interfere with you as long as you dont interfere with him Just the right king for us Not pig-headed Not meddlesome Thinks that nothing we do matters a rap What do you say, Joe?

PROTEUS After all, why not? if your Majesty is in earnest

MAGNUS I assure you I am very much in earnest

PROTEUS Well, I confess I did not foresee this turn of events But I ought to have foreseen it What your Majesty proposes is the straightforward, logical, intellectually honest solution of our difficulty Consequently it is the last solution I could have expected in politics But I reckoned without your Majesty's character The more I think of it the more clearly I see that you are right—that you are taking the only course open to you

CRASSUS I never said I was against it, Joe

BALBUS Neither did I

NICOBAR I think theres a great deal to be said for it I have no objection

PLINY One king is no worse than another, is he?

BOANERGES Is he any better? The way you fellows scuttle backward and forward from one mind to another whenever Joe holds up his finger is disgusting This is a Cabinet of sheep

PROTEUS Well, give the flock a better lead if you can Have you anything else to propose?

BOANERGES I dont know that I have on the spur of the moment We should have had notice of this But I suppose the King must do as he thinks right

PROTEUS Then the goat goes with the sheep, so thats all right

BOANERGES Who are you calling a goat?

NICOBAR If you come to that, who are you calling sheep?

AMANDA Steady there, children! steady! steady! [*To the King*] You have brought us all round, sir, as usual

PROTEUS There is nothing more to be said

AMANDA That means another half hour at least

BOANERGES Woman, this is not the moment for your tomfooleries

PROTEUS [*impressively*] Bill is right, Amanda [*He rises and becomes the conventional House of Commons orator*]

Ministers compose themselves to listen with grave attention, as if in church, but Lysistrata is contemptuous and Amanda amused

PROTEUS [*continuing*] It is a solemn moment It is a moment in which an old tie is being broken I am not ashamed to confess that it is a tie from which I have learned something

MALE MINISTERS [*murmur*] Hear hear! Hear hear!

PROTEUS. For my own part—and I think I may speak for others here as well—it has been no mere political tie, but a tie of sincere friendship

Renewed murmurs of sympathy. Increasing emotion

PROTEUS We have had our disagreements—as which of us has not?—but they have been family quarrels

CRASSUS That's all Nothing more

PROTEUS May I say lovers' quarrels?

PLINY [*nipping his eyes*] You may, Joe You may

PROTEUS My friends, we came here to a meeting We find, alas! that the meeting is to be a leavetaking [*Crassus sniffs tearfully*]. It is a sad leavetaking on our part, but a cordial one [*Hear Hear from Pliny*] We are cast down, but not discouraged Looking back to the past with regret, we can still look forward to the future with hope That future has its dangers and its difficulties It will bring us new problems, and it will bring us face to face with a new king But the new problems and the new king will not make us forget our old counsellor, monarch, and—he will allow me to say—comrade [*Hear Hears ad libitum*] I know my words will find an echo in all your hearts when I conclude by saying that whatsoever king shall reign—

AMANDA You'll be the Vicar of Bray, Joe.

Up roar Proteus flings himself into his chair

indignantly

BALBUS Shame!

NICOBAR. Shut up, you b—

PLINY A joke's a joke, but really—

CRASSUS. Too bad, Amanda! Behave yourself

LYSISTRATA She has a perfect right to speak You are a parcel of sentimental fools.

BOANERGES [*rising*] Silence Order.

AMANDA. Sorry

BOANERGES. So you ought to be Where's your manners? Where's your education? King Magnus, we part; but we part as strong men part as friends The Prime Minister has correctly represented the sentiments of all the men present I call on them to express those sentiments in the good old English fashion. [*Singing in stentorian tones*] Fo-o-o-o-r-r-r

MALE MINISTERS EXCEPT PROTEUS [*rising and singing*]

—he's a jolly good fel-low

For he's a jolly good fel-low-

For he's—

MAGNUS [*peremptorily*] Stop Stop

Sudden silence and misgiving They sit down furtively

MAGNUS I thank you with all my heart, but there is a misapprehension We are not taking leave of one another I have no intention of withdrawing from an active part in politics.

PROTEUS What!

MAGNUS You are looking on me, with an emotion which has deeply touched me, as a man with a political past But I look on myself rather as a man with a political future I have not yet told you my plans

NICOBAR What plans?

BALBUS A retired king cant have plans and a future

MAGNUS Why not? I am looking forward to a most exciting and enjoyable time As I shall of course dissolve parliament, the fun will begin with a general election

BOANERGES [*dismayed*] But I've only just been elected Do you mean that I shall have to stand two elections in one month? Have you thought of the expenses?

MAGNUS Surely your expenses will be paid by the State.

BOANERGES. Paid by the State! Is that all you know about electioneering in England?

PROTEUS You will get your whack out of the party funds, Bill; and if you cant find the extras you must put up with straight votes.

Go on, sir we want to hear about those plans of yours

MAGNUS My last act of royal authority will be to divest myself of all titles and dignities, so that I may step down at once into the position of a commoner

BOANERGES Step up, you mean The common man is the superior, not the inferior, of the titled man

MAGNUS That is why I am going to make myself a common man, Mr Boanerges

PLINY Well, it does you honor

CRASSUS Not all of us would be capable of a sacrifice like that

BOANERGES A fine gesture, sir A fine gesture I admit it

PROTEUS [*suspicious*] And since when, pray, has your Majesty taken to making gestures? Whats the game this time?

BOANERGES Shame!

PROTEUS Shut up, you gaby [*To the King*] I say, whats the game?

MAGNUS There is no imposing on you, Prime Minister The game is, of course, that when I come back into politics I shall be in a better position as a commoner than as a peer I shall seek a parliamentary seat

PROTEUS You in the House of Commons?

MAGNUS [*blandly*] It is my intention to offer myself to the Royal Borough of Windsor as a candidate at the forthcoming General Election

All the rest except Boanerges and the ladies rise in consternation

PROTEUS This is treachery

BALBUS A dirty trick

NICOBAR The meanest on record

PLINY He'll be at the top of the poll

CRASSUS There wont be any poll it will be a walk-over

BALBUS This shews what all your fine manners and friendly ways are worth

NICOBAR Hypocrite!

CRASSUS Humbug!

LYSISTRATA I wish your Majesty every success

AMANDA Hear hear! Fair play, boys Why shouldnt he go into Parliament with us?

BOANERGES Well said! well said! Why not?

THE OTHER MALE MINISTERS Ya-a-a-ah! [*They sit down in utter disgust*]

PROTEUS [*very sullen*] And when you are in Parliament, what then?

MAGNUS There are several possibilities I shall naturally endeavor to form a party My

son King Robert will have to call on some Party leader who can depend on the support of the House of Commons to form a Government. He may call on you He may even call on me

AMANDA [*breaks the glum silence by whistling a bar or two of the National Anthem*]¹¹

MAGNUS Whatever happens, it will be a great relief to us to be able to speak out quite frankly about one another in public You have never been able to tell the British people what you really think of me no real criticism of the King is possible I have never been able to speak my mind as to your various capacities and characters All that reserve, that tedious affectation, that unwholesome concealment will end I hope you look forward to our new footing as pleasurable as I do

LYSISTRATA I am delighted, sir You will fight Breakages for me

AMANDA It will be awful fun

BOANERGES Now, Mr Prime Minister, we are waiting for you What have you to say about it?

PROTEUS [*rising and speaking slowly, with his brows deeply knitted*] Has your Majesty got that ultimatum on you?

MAGNUS [*produces it from his breast pocket and presents it to him*]

PROTEUS [*with measured emphasis, after tearing the paper up into four pieces at two deliberate strokes, and throwing the pieces away*] There is not going to be any abdication There is not going to be any general election There is not going to be any ultimatum We go on as before The crisis is a washout [*To the King, with deadly concentration*] I will never forgive you for this You stole your ace of trumps from the hand I played this morning [*He takes his hat from the balustrade and goes away through the park*]

BOANERGES [*rising*] That was a very deplorable exhibition of temper on the part of the Prime Minister, sir It was not the gesture of a Strong Man I will remonstrate with him You may depend on me [*He takes his hat and follows Proteus in a serious and dignified manner*]

NICOBAR [*rising*] Well, I shall not say what I think. [*He is taking his hat when the King addresses him*]

MAGNUS So I have not upset the apple cart after all, Mr Nicobar

NICOBAR You can upset it as soon as you

like for all I care I am going out of politics
Politics is a mug's game [*He goes*]

CRASSUS [*rising reluctantly and taking his hat*]
If Nick goes, I shall have to go too

MAGNUS Can you really tear yourself away
from politics?

CRASSUS Only too glad to be well out of
them, if Breakages will let me They shoved
me into it, and I daresay theyll find another
job for me. [*He goes*]

PLINY [*cheerful to the last as he, too, goes for
his hat*] Well, I am glad nothing's happened
You know, sir, nothing ever really does
happen in the Cabinet. Never mind their bit
of temper Theyll feed out of your hand to-
morrow [*He goes*]

BALBUS [*after taking his hat*] Now that theyre
all gone I dont mind saying that if anything
should ever happen to the throne, and your
Majesty should become a President with a
Cabinet to pick, you might easily find a
worse Home Secretary than me, with all my
faults

MAGNUS I shall bear it in mind By the way,
if you should happen to overtake the Prime
Minster, will you be so good as to remind
him that we quite forgot to settle that little
affair of the proposal of America to annex
the British Commonwealth

BALBUS By the Lord, so we did! Well, thats
a good one! Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha! [*He
goes out laughing heartily*]

MAGNUS They dont take it in, Lizzie not
one bit It is as if another planet were crash-
ing into us The kingdom and the power and
the glory will pass from us and leave us
naked, face to face with our real selves at
last

LYSISTRATA. So much the better, if by our
real selves you mean the old English stock
that was unlike any other Nowadays men
all over the world are as much alike as hotel
dinners It's no use pretending that the
America of George Washington is going to
swallow up the England of Queen Anne
The America of George Washington is as
dead as Queen Anne What they call an
American is only a wop pretending to be a

Pilgrim Father He is no more Uncle Jona-
than than you are John Bull

MAGNUS Yes we live in a world of wops, all
melting into one another; and when all the
frontiers are down London may be outvoted
by Tennessee, and all the other places where
we still madly teach our children the menta-
lity of an eighteenth century village school

LYSISTRATA Never fear, sir It is not the
most ignorant national crowd that will come
out on top, but the best power station, for
you cant do without power stations, and you
cant run them on patriotic songs and hatred
of the foreigner, and guff and bugaboo,
though you can run nationalism on nothing
else But I am heartbroken at your not com-
ing into the House with us to keep old Eng-
land in front and lead a new Party against
Breakages [*tears come into her eyes*]

MAGNUS [*patting her consolingly on the back*]
That would have been splendid, wouldnt it?
But I am too old fashioned This is a farce
that younger men must finish

AMANDA [*taking her arm*] Come home with
me, dear. I will sing to you until you cant
help laughing Come

*Lysistrata pockets her handkerchief, shakes
the King's hands impulsively, and goes with
Amanda The King plunges into deep thought
Presently the Queen comes back*

THE QUEEN Now Magnus it's time to dress
for dinner

MAGNUS [*much disturbed*] Oh, not now I have
something very big to think about I dont want
any dinner

THE QUEEN [*peremptorily*] No dinner! Did
anyone ever hear of such a thing! You know
you will not sleep if you think after seven
o'clock

MAGNUS [*norried*] But really, Jemima—

THE QUEEN [*going to him and taking his arm*]
Now, now, now! dont be naughty. I mustnt
be late for dinner Come on, like a good little
boy

*The King, with a grimace of hopeless tender-
ness, allows himself to be led away.*

THE END

XXXIII

JITTA'S ATONEMENT

BY SIEGFRIED TREBITSCH

Author of Genesung, Weltuntergang, Das Haus am Abhang, Tagwandler, Ein Muttersohn, Der Tod und die Liebe, Gefährliche Jahre, Spätes Licht, Die Frau ohne Dienstag, Der Gehegte, Die Last des Blutes, etc etc

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD SHAW

ACT I

1920 *The drawing room in a flat in Vienna. It is fashionably decorated and elegantly furnished, but not homelike, as there are no books nor personal belongings nor household odds and ends lying about. The two photogravure reproductions of pictures on the walls, symmetrically placed at equal distances from the door, are of the refinedly aphrodisiac character considered de rigueur in hotels. But the place is not quite like a hotel sitting room, because there is very little furniture—only two seats, a couch, and a small table with a glass flower-vase and a mirror on it.*

It is an oblong room, and from the point of view of anyone looking towards the corner the long wall on the right has in the middle of it the door leading to the entrance hall, and the short wall on the left has an open door close to the corner through which a bed with rose-coloured hangings is partly visible. In the same wall further forward from the same point of view is the fireplace.

The couch is in the corner, parallel to the longer wall, not quite close against it. A comfortable upholstered stool, really a chair without a back, is at the foot of the couch. This stool has a cushion on it which evidently belongs to the couch. The other seat, a chair with arms, is almost in the middle of the room, but nearer to the fireplace than to the door. The table stands near the corner of the fireplace.

It is almost dark.

Mrs Billiter, an elderly housekeeper, has something of the same undomesticated air as the room. Her hair, though not aggressively dyed, is still rather younger than her face. She is well dressed, like a hotel manageress. She opens the door, letting in some electric light from the hall. She has a silver tray in her hands, with a siphon, two tumblers, and a bottle on it. She switches on the light at the door, and crosses the room to the table, where she puts down the tray. She looks round the room to see whether it is tidy. She goes

to the stool, takes the cushion from it, and puts it in its proper place on the couch.

Somebody rings at the outer door of the flat. Mrs Billiter goes out to open it.

A GIRL'S VOICE [the accent is not that of a lady] Gentleman ordered these. Suppose it's all right, isn't it?

MRS BILLITER'S VOICE Yes. Just bring them in, and put them in the vase for me, will you?

Mrs Billiter returns, followed by a girl from the florist's shop, carrying a handsome present of flowers.

MRS BILLITER [pointing to the vase] There I'll fetch some water.

She goes into the bedroom and switches on the light there. The roseate hangings of the bed appear to great advantage. The flower girl, on her way to the vase, stops fascinated.

Mrs Billiter returns with a jug from the bedroom washstand—a very pretty jug in rose color and gold.

The flower girl puts the roses into the vase, and Mrs Billiter fills it with water.

Mrs Billiter takes the jug back into the bedroom, and the girl steals after her to the door and peeps enviously in.

Mrs Billiter returns, putting out the bedroom light as she does so, and finds the girl at the door.

THE FLOWER GIRL Just right for two, ain't it?

MRS BILLITER [incensed] What do you mean, with your "Just right for two"?

THE FLOWER GIRL [grinning] Oh, it's nothing to me. But I know.

MRS BILLITER You know too much, you do. Are they paid for?

THE FLOWER GIRL Oh yes, that's quite all right. [She grins again, shewing no sign of going.]

MRS BILLITER [peremptorily] Well? What are you waiting for? And what are you grinning at?

THE FLOWER GIRL Aint the gentleman here? He promised to leave me something

MRS BILLITER [*impatiently groping in her purse and extracting a tip*] That's how they give themselves away, offering tips when they have no call to [*She gives her some money*] There! Now, out you go I'm busy

THE FLOWER GIRL [*sarcastic*] Sorry, I'm sure Thanks awfully [*She goes to the door, but stops on hearing the outer door opened by a latch-key from without*]. Oh, here is the gentleman

The gentleman enters. The girl ogles him. He recognizes her, and makes a gesture towards his pocket.

MRS BILLITER [*very decisively*] That's all right, sir she's had what you promised [*To the girl, sternly*] Good evening to you [*She sails to the door so formidably that the girl, after an ineffectual grimace, has to go*]

The moment the gentleman is left alone he shews signs of severe physical suffering. His ascent of the stairs has brought on an attack of angina pectoris. He makes his way to the stool, and collapses on it, struggling with the paroxysm. Mrs Billiter returns.

MRS BILLITER [*running to him*] Oh dear, oh dear, has it come on again, sir?

THE GENTLEMAN [*a little better*] It's all right now, Mrs Billiter I took the stairs too fast I rush at them without thinking [*He rises, and tries to take off his overcoat. She helps him*] Thank you, Mrs Billiter I—I—I—[*gasping*] Just a moment. Whew! [*As the coat comes off he plunges to the armchair, and sinks into it*]

MRS BILLITER How often have I begged you never to walk upstairs but always to take the lift? And now see the state you are in!

THE GENTLEMAN. Don't look at me it will only distress you Angina pectoris is a horrible thing, but it passes off soon You can do nothing, thank you

MRS BILLITER [*taking his hat and coat out into the vestibule*] Dear! dear! dear!

Rather dazed by the attack, he sits up, straightening his collar and coat rather irresolutely, and looking very careworn indeed. He is well dressed, on the verge of fifty, going grey, very distinguished in appearance and kindly in manner.

MRS BILLITER [*returning*] Why will you never take the lift, sir? It isn't as if anyone in this house knew you And for that matter you meet people on the stairs as well as in the lift.

THE GENTLEMAN I know; but I mustn't let the liftmen see me coming here too often People talk, even when they have to live by

holding their tongues

MRS BILLITER [*reproachfully*] Oh, sir!

THE GENTLEMAN [*quickly saving the situation*] Except you, Mrs Billiter. You are an exception to all the rules

MRS BILLITER It's you who are the exception, sir I wish all the other gentlemen that keep rooms here on the quiet to enjoy themselves were like you There are people and people in this world, and I know a gentleman when I see him And I feel sure your lady is a real lady, and always the same lady, though of course I take care never to see her

THE GENTLEMAN. That's very kind of you, Mrs Billiter. [*He rises to go to the table*]

MRS BILLITER [*stopping him*] Now do sit quiet a moment, sir What was it you wanted?

THE GENTLEMAN A mouthful of soda water

MRS BILLITER There. I'll get it for you Sit down [*He does so. She goes to the table and fills a glass from the siphon*] If you would only let me put a drop of brandy in it?

THE GENTLEMAN [*shaking his head decisively*] It would probably kill me I know. I am a doctor [*He takes the glass from her*] Thank you. [*He drinks*]

MRS BILLITER. You are not right yet I can see it in your face

THE GENTLEMAN [*hands her back the glass a little abruptly, and pulls himself together*]"

MRS BILLITER There! I shouldn't have said that. [*She replaces the glass on the table, snubbed*]

THE GENTLEMAN Not at all. I know how anxious you are about me, and how kindly you mean it But I am all right now; and I—I—[*he takes out his watch and looks at it*] I am expecting somebody

MRS BILLITER [*taking the hint*] Yes, sir I'm going [*She crosses the room to the door, but turns for a moment appealingly before going out*] But you will take the lift next time, sir, won't you? If anything were to happen to you—not that I think anything like that, of course, but—

THE GENTLEMAN Of course not, Mrs Billiter. Still—[*he shrugs his shoulders*]"

MRS BILLITER Yes, sir. And then what could I do but send for the police?

THE GENTLEMAN. Quite so, quite so If I come again I will take the lift I promise.

MRS BILLITER Thank you, sir. Thank you kindly [*She goes out, closing the door very softly behind her*]

The gentleman, left alone, rises and goes to

the table, where he takes up the mirror and looks at his wrinkles and his blanching hair. He shakes his head and puts the mirror down. Then he takes out a cigaret, puts it between his lips, takes out a match, and is about to strike it when the bell rings twice. His face lights up, he throws the match and the cigaret into the fire, and goes out eagerly to admit the visitor, leaving the door of the room open. Immediately afterwards a veiled lady hurries in like a hunted creature. He follows her, shuts the door, and comes to her in the middle of the room. They embrace.

THE GENTLEMAN [affectionately] Why do you always look as if you were running away, and had just stumbled into my arms by chance?

THE LADY I always feel as if my husband were lying in wait for me at the next turn.

THE GENTLEMAN Well, suppose he were! You are not afraid of poor Alfred, are you? At home you are a perfect tyrant to him.

JITTA I should have no courage if he caught me. Besides, if we are found out there will be an end of everything.

BRUNO I almost wish we were found out.

JITTA Why?

BRUNO It would force us to stand by one another, and come out openly before all the world with our love.

JITTA [embracing him impulsively] Shall we?

BRUNO There is my wife. Always my wife.

JITTA [recoiling from him impatiently, and throwing her cloak on the couch] Oh yes, Agnes. Always Agnes, Agnes, Agnes.

BRUNO She has done nothing to deserve our betrayal of her. She has sacrificed her life to me. I can't face what she would suffer.

JITTA Has she sacrificed more for you than you for her? It is not the thought of Agnes that holds me back. But the scandal would ruin you. [She takes off her hat, and puts it on the table.]

BRUNO [with sudden energy] I want to be ruined. Oh, the life of a University professor. His respectability kills his mind. His wife's respectability kills her soul. They both become mere shells of their former selves going through life in grooves, on rails like tramcars, envying the tinkers and gipsies. If it were not for Agnes I should commit some disgraceful offence to free myself.

JITTA I am afraid disgrace would not mend matters. I could not bear yours.

BRUNO Nor I yours. We are in the net.

JITTA Not here, Bruno. We have broken through the net into our dreamland. [Now

that her hat and veil are off Jitta is revealed as one of those attractively refined women whose wistfully sensitive unsmiling mouths and tragic eyes not only make imaginative men fancy unfathomable depths in their natures, and something undefinably sad and splendid in their destinies, but actually force this conception on the women themselves, however commonplace their characters and circumstances may be. Jitta is nothing more extraordinary than the wife of a college don, and has done nothing more heroic than fall in love with another and more poetic don (also married), but to her lover and herself her life is as dignified and beautiful as her face, and their relations as nobly tragic as her eyes. So, as we are all a little like that, let us share their dream for a moment whilst she continues, sitting down beside him.] You must brush off the bits of the broken net. [Tracing on his brow] There is a thread of it here, and here, and straight down here. [She kisses his brow] No, they are not gone yet.

BRUNO It is not the net. I can leave that behind when I come here into the dreamland. These last few months have been wonderful. But they have been terrible.

JITTA Yes, wonderful and terrible. But they have been real, real. Life in the net is never real. It is all acting.

BRUNO That is true. But there is something still more real than the dream.

JITTA What is that?

BRUNO The awakening.

JITTA For me there will be no awakening.

BRUNO There is always the tap at the door in the morning. The tap with bony knuckles. The caller.

JITTA Death! Oh, why will you always harp on that? Death is nothing. Life with love is everything. Think, Bruno. We are here alone. There is nothing between us and happiness except the courage to grasp it. Can you never be happy?

BRUNO Can any mortal be happy?

JITTA [suddenly prosaic and impatient] Yes, Alfred can. A glass of wine and a cigar can make Alfred happy. A vote of thanks can make Alfred happy. A cheque for £25 can make him happy. But I cannot make you happy.

BRUNO Dearest love, you can, you do make me inexpressibly happy. So happy, that every time you go away from me, and I stand listening to your footsteps dying away in the distance—I always listen to

them to catch the last sound of you—I am stabbed with a fear that I have held you in my arms for the last time. But when we have been parted for days, and I am here waiting for you and thinking the moments endless until you come, and at last I hear your ring, I suddenly become like a freshman just up from school [*She laughs, smoothing his grey hair*]. Yes I know, but grey as I am, I am still a hobbledehoy, just a student waiting for his girl at the corner of the street where her shop is

JITTA [*moved*] And do you think it is any different with me? All day I long to be with you, to say a thousand things to you! And when at last—[*she finishes the sentence by a caress*]! When you are away from me, I plod through my housework, and just count the days until—until this [*she again presses him in her arms, and draws him down beside her on the couch*]

BRUNO If only I were young! Then I could really begin a new life with you instead of merely thinking and dreaming about it

JITTA I like it better as it is I don't want to see you every day and become a commonplace with you, Bruno.

BRUNO But are you content with these heartbreaking stolen hours? I'd risk you becoming a commonplace I want you to be a commonplace for me, but I daresay I should bore you

JITTA [*sighing blissfully*] The happiness of these stolen hours is so delicious that it makes up to me for everything I have to endure between times And who knows what would happen if I were to break up your home and shatter your career? Are you sure we should not be too tired out, too broken by the effort, to enjoy our rest? One has to be young to do such things, Bruno young enough to be able to forget.

BRUNO [*sadly*] You are right Our love looks well only by candlelight It won't stand daylight

JITTA [*refusing to be discouraged*] Daylight is for your work, for your great book that is to be the crown of your career But here in the candlelight you belong to me, and to me only.

BRUNO [*quickly*] Oh, not here alone Do you think that my wife and my daughter put you quite out of my head when I am at home? They never do you are everywhere But what must it be for you? I often reproach

myself—

JITTA [*softly*] You mustn't do that I am not unhappy, Bruno. I was at first I hardly dared go home and face Alfred's inquisitive eyes But he saw nothing his self-conceit is impenetrable His cheerful grin killed my conscience I hold up my head now everywhere I am proud of belonging to you. When one is really happy, one is ruthless and shameless

BRUNO Jitta. do you know that you belonged to me before we ever saw one another?

JITTA Yes We were destined—

BRUNO I don't mean that I mean that we actually belonged to one another physically I mean that my daughter—born before we knew one another—is your daughter

JITTA Edith! What do you mean, Bruno? You have the strangest fancies

BRUNO This is not a fancy, Jitta It is a hard scientific fact I worked out its theoretic possibility before Edith was born—before I ever set eyes on you It strikes me dumb with wonder when I think how it has worked out between us The daughter of my wife, my child and hers, not yours, resembles you, aye, loves you more than she loves her own mother, though she may not know it

JITTA [*thoughtfully*] Strange And I love your Edith as only a childless woman can love the child of the man she has interested and saved I am not clever enough to share the rest of your science with you, but this I believe and accept But how can such a miracle come about?

BRUNO [*mystically*] Men do not yet realize that no prophetic aspiration of theirs can fall utterly without fruit if its roots be deep enough in their innermost conviction

JITTA Bruno that must be right It is an inspiration It takes hold of my heart with both hands You really are great

BRUNO Not at all. it is not new. everybody knows it nowadays in the rough But it has never been worked out scientifically far enough to explain this miracle of Edith and you Well, I am working it out, and there is somebody else working at it with me

JITTA [*jealous*] Somebody else?

BRUNO You would never guess who

JITTA I do not want to guess. I do not care.

BRUNO Think of the most hardened materialist you know the very last man you could imagine lending himself to such a mystical speculation!

JITTA [*relieved*] Oh, a man! The most hopeless materialist I know is my husband; and I do not want to be reminded of him just now

BRUNO But it is your husband I mean I have converted him

JITTA Oh, impossible He would never believe a thing like that Don't let Alfred deceive you, Bruno He is only playing with your belief because he feels sure of discovering some grossly material explanation of it, and making you ridiculous He does not believe it as you believe it

BRUNO [*brightly*] I do not say he does I do not say he can Alfred is clever, but he is not me—or rather, not us two two in one

JITTA Darling!

BRUNO All the same, he is burning with ambition to have his name connected with a new departure in science. As he has failed to do it in physics he is willing to do it in psychology rather than not do it at all

JITTA [*scornfully*] At your expense?

BRUNO Not altogether, dearest He really has given me some quite handy curve diagrams for my lectures He knows everything what he lacks is a sense of the significance of what he knows I am really sorry for him, and should like to help him

JITTA You can help him without letting him rob you of your ideas

BRUNO It is not he who is robbing me of my ideas It is I who am robbing him of his wife, and the less he is conscious of his loss the meaner thief am I I feel that through and through [*He kisses her hand passionately*] I have taken a priceless treasure from him I must make amends somehow I must pay my debt That sense of obligation is in my very bones

JITTA [*looking hard at him*] Why have I never felt this sense of obligation to your wife? Have I no conscience? or have you too much?

BRUNO It is not the same. You do not feel that you have taken anything from Agnes you feel that she has taken something from you

JITTA I know that I have a divine right to you And I know that she has not

BRUNO There are other rights beside divine rights If I had never come into your life, you would perhaps have come to some sort of understanding with Alfred, and he would have found some sort of happiness in

possessing you

JITTA He has all the happiness he is capable of

BRUNO We have no right to say so I have taken you from him

JITTA You have not taken me from him I belonged to myself and I gave you myself

BRUNO I have betrayed his trust

JITTA As I have betrayed your wife's trust

BRUNO That is quite different Your relations with Agnes are mere society relations, conventional and superficial But I am your husband's comrade we were chums at school we were at college together we are professional colleagues He knows me intimately, and if he were not such a confoundedly bad psychologist he would know that Nature meant you to be my wife It is a stroke of luck for us that he knows nothing—if indeed it is only luck, and not his subconscious knowledge that he must not let himself know Yes he not only does not know he will not know he refuses to know And that refusal, because it is unconscious, binds my sense of honor as if he spared us knowingly

JITTA [*changing her tone, and trying to soothe and coax him*] Darling you are tormenting yourself for nothing Let me see whether I can cure you of all these scruples and fancies They are only spooks [*She draws him towards the bedroom*] Come

BRUNO No, not yet [*He gets away from her by standing up She shrinks a little, wounded*] I am telling you this once for all, so that I may never have to speak of it again God knows it is not to involve you in my struggles with myself, nor to whitewash myself, that I am spending our priceless moments like this I am as impatient as you are I long for you beyond all expression But there is something you must do for me Something you can understand only when you know the rights of it

JITTA [*repelled and anxious*] But what is it?

BRUNO [*pulling himself together*] I want to speak to you about my book I have something very important to say to you about it

JITTA [*a little disappointed*] Bruno can't that wait a little? You know how I value your work; but we have so little time left this evening—

BRUNO [*resolutely*] It is just because I have so little time left that I dare not put this off any longer You know the value of my book Well, you must take charge of it.

JITTA You need not trouble about that, Bruno— it will make your name famous without my help

BRUNO [*looking hard at her, and forcing the emphasis of his words to the utmost*] Not my name His name

JITTA God of Heaven! whose name?

BRUNO Your husband's

JITTA [*springing up*] Alfred's!

BRUNO Listen to me. The book is finished the typed copy will be found in my desk And the title-page reads "Fetters of the Feminine Psyche, by Professor Alfred Lenkheim."

JITTA. Bruno! You are mad.

BRUNO I burnt the original manuscript yesterday there is not a word of it in my handwriting left to prove that I am the author They will find a book by your husband among my things that is all [*She is about to protest*] Promise me that you will leave this secret buried in my grave

JITTA [*beside herself*] But why? Why? Why?

BRUNO [*seizing her hands, but now pleading like a lover*] It is my deepest wish It is my most urgent prayer to you, Jitta

JITTA [*gasping*] You ask me to do that! to promise you this unheard-of thing! This man who has no soul, who has been guilty of everything to me that a man can be guilty of to a woman except the infidelity that I would welcome with delight to excuse my own (he is not man enough for that) the fruit of your life's work is to drop into his mouth! And I am to be your accomplice in such a crime! No I cannot Never

BRUNO [*soothing her*] I know how hard it is for you, darling That is why I have not been able to bring myself to tell you until today But I know you will not fail me.

JITTA Dont say that, Bruno, as if it settled everything. I cannot act like a madwoman. Give me a reason.

BRUNO I will Listen A book by a dead man is an orphan Orphans sometimes die when they are not adopted Mendel's masterpiece lay dead for thirty-five years while the fame of the living Darwin spread over the world If Alfred adopts my orphan it will not perish, for Alfred's wife will adopt it too.

JITTA Oh, Bruno, Bruno, how can you? That is so clever, so damnably clever. Has it come to mere cleverness between us?

BRUNO I asked for a promise You asked for a reason.

JITTA. But I am thinking of your fame—
BRUNO [*snapping his fingers*] Psha! That for my fame! What does it matter from whose hands the new generation will take the torch to carry on the great race of science? The truth will be as true with Alfred's name tacked on to it as Bruno's.

JITTA [*impatiently*] Oh yes, yes I know all that It sounds like a sentence from your annual address to your students It's not true, Bruno I feel it It is not human There is something else at the back of your mind

BRUNO. No—except this When I finally—and irrevocably sealed my resolution yesterday by burning the manuscript, there came to me a moment of extraordinary exaltation in which I saw this sacrifice as my atonement to Alfred It is the price at which I buy his wife from him; and now at last I can take my happiness with both hands, free in my conscience, right in my heart, in all honor as well as in all affection to the very end [*He clasps her to his breast*]

JITTA [*still wondering at him*] You throw the greatest achievement of your life to him like a bone to a dog; and then feel you have made us two one [*Breaking away from him*] No, no, Bruno you are asking too much. You know that I love you as my man, without a thought of your greatness and your work, but all the same your work your greatness, are a part of you, and I love every bit of you, your body, your soul, your reputation, your work, everything that would not exist if you did not exist All that is my treasure and my pride When you take a handful of it and throw it into the mud, you make me so much the poorer Have you thought of that?

BRUNO. When two people stand to one another as we stand, the children born from their intercourse are not always children of flesh and blood, but inspirations, intuitions, convictions that they cannot discard without unfaithfulness This is such an inspiration Will you be unfaithful to it?

JITTA Bruno you want to play at Providence Alfred is far too conceited to let anyone play Providence to him If he refuses, what then?

BRUNO He will not refuse I have thought all that out Why should he refuse to father a book which he already regards as half his own? He believes that I could never have written it without him And you know how ambitious he is. I can depend on Alfred

absolutely Can I depend on you?

JITTA [*half beaten*] Who knows? I cannot depend on myself This sacrifice is no child born of our intercourse, Bruno you may be its father, but I am not its mother I shall be its stepmother, and I shall hate it as no stepmother ever hated before But the book is yours, and I have no rights over it it must take the course you desire. I cannot go further than that When you ask me to bind myself by a solemn vow, I—[*shuddering*] no, no it is inhuman a mockery, an impossibility

BRUNO I know I am putting your love to the cruellest test, but oh, Jitta, Jitta, do not fail me

JITTA So be it [*He snatches her hands and kisses them*] I promise you that if I survive the day that takes you from me, I will hide the truth as you demand, and take all the ghastly consequences just as you are mad enough to mean them Are you satisfied now?

BRUNO [*clasping her convulsively to him and hardly able to speak*] I—I—thanks, thanks My love

JITTA [*extricating herself quickly from his embrace*] But if God wishes to be good to me he will never let me live to keep my promise

BRUNO I could not have pained you like this if I had the smallest doubt that I shall go first and go soon

JITTA Dont say that Oh, do let us forget Death for one moment.

BRUNO Death is nothing if I could be sure that I should die tonight I should be unspeakably glad, for I should not have to strike you the bitterest blow of all

JITTA Bruno! Another blow!

BRUNO Yes, another My strength is going from me, and I need it all to force myself not to play the coward

JITTA How?

BRUNO By leaving you today without daring to tell you that I do not intend to meet you again

JITTA [*struck to the heart*] Not meet me again! Leave me!

BRUNO [*with deliberate emphasis*] This must be the last time [*Rising, with a sudden fanciful recklessness*] Come let it be the best Let it be so full of happiness that we can say "It is enough farewell"

JITTA. You are going to give me up! You can bring yourself to do that!

BRUNO Nonsense! I shall never give you

up. But it would be a crime to let you meet me here again at such a risk

JITTA How is the risk greater now than it has always been?

BRUNO It was only a risk of being caught here with a live man That was nothing only a secret that three can keep What about the risk of being found with a dead one?

JITTA [*about to shriek*]

BRUNO [*covering her mouth with his hand*] Hush—sh! [*She looks affrightedly at him he looks gravely and significantly at her*] It is all up with me, dearest I could not stop working, and my heart—

JITTA [*with agonizing anxiety*] Is it worse?

BRUNO [*with a ghost of a laugh*] Worse! It has gone all to pieces I had no right to let you come this evening I have put off telling you too long, but when I climbed those terrible stairs just now, I knew You would have to give your name to the police Our relations would be shouted through the streets and posted on the newspaper bills if you were found here with a—with a [*he cannot say it, and indicates, by a gesture, the figure of a dead man lying on the floor*]

JITTA [*flinching at the image, but steadfast in her thought*] Have no fear, Bruno Why did you not tell me sooner what was troubling you? I could have relieved your mind I have known all along that you were ill, and my only fear was that that [*she repeats his gesture*] might happen when you were alone instead of in my arms Does that sound as if I cared what would become of me without you?

BRUNO But I care, dearest That is why I am resolved on our parting before this crazy tired old clock [*he taps his left breast*] runs down and stops ticking for good and all.

JITTA Never There is only one thing that can part me from you, and that is not the stopping of the clock, but of your love for me No other danger exists for me, and no forethought of ours can protect us against that if it comes [*Abandoning herself to her passion*] All the more reason why we must make the most of our love while it is within our reach I love you I love you we are alive, not dead you are living with my life as well as your own your blood surges to mine with mine you cannot die while I hold you fast All the rest is an uneasy dream that means nothing this is love, and love is life made irresistible

BRUNO [*carried away*] Life yes this is life,

and this [*he kisses her eyes*], and this [*he kisses her lips*] What a fool I was with my iron resolutions! one throb of your breast, one touch of your lips; and where are they? Nothing matters but Jitta, Jitta, Jitta [*he kisses her again and again*] I am neither weak nor afraid now, and I promise you to live a hundred years

JITTA All the unhappinesses are forgotten: they never existed [*She turns him round and drags him towards the bedroom*] Come

BRUNO [*beside himself*] You trust me, and I must betray you. You thought me a young man; and I let you think so. But you shall not be deceived. You have made me as young as I seemed to you [*He seizes her round the hips, and lifts her up exultantly*]

JITTA [*frightened*] Oh God, no take care, Bruno take care

BRUNO [*setting her down gaily*] Bah! Do I love you?

JITTA Yes, yes You love me I love you Come

BRUNO [*pushing her towards the bedroom door*] Quick, quick

JITTA [*running into the bedroom*] Yes, yes, yes

BRUNO [*with a grim change of countenance*] Poor Jitta! That lift broke the mainspring [*He staggers against the door frame, clutches at the wall to save himself, strikes the electric light out by chance, reels back into the middle of the room, and drops dead*]

JITTA [*running in she has begun to undress*] What is the matter? Where are you? [*She stumbles against the body*] Oh God! [*She snatches on the light*] Bruno [*She rushes to him and kneels by him*]. Bruno speak to me if you can. Is it your heart again? What can I do for you? Shall I try to lift you?

She tries to raise him by his shoulders, but they are too heavy. She puts her hands round his neck and pulls it up from the floor, but the back of his head remains hanging and his jaw drops. With a gasp of horror she replaces the head and closes the open mouth. Then she scrambles to her feet and runs to the other door, calling breathlessly and voicelessly Mrs Billiter, Mrs Billiter. She opens the door, and regaining her voice, cries Mrs— She checks herself, suddenly remembering the consequences to herself of being found with the body. She closes the door quickly and noiselessly. She tries to think, her strained senses shivering in her eyes. Her fingers clutch for a moment at her half-naked breast as she thinks of her disordered appearance. She dashes into

the bedroom, and reappears almost immediately with her blouse on, arranging it with nervous hands. She puts on her hat and mantle anyhow. As she turns to rush to the door the hat falls off. With a little cry of misery she takes the hat-pins from the hat and pins it properly to her hair, then she looks at herself in the mirror and shakes her mantle straight. She turns, and is hurrying to the door when she finds the body in her way. A flush of remorse comes over her. She turns impulsively to the vase, takes out a handful of roses, and is stooping to lay them on his breast when she realizes that a man who drops dead cannot scatter flowers on himself. She shakes her head and puts the roses back, puts her hands distractedly to her head in an anguish of perplexity, feeling that she must not leave him without some ceremony of love. There is only one thing that comes into her mind that will not compromise her. She goes to him, and cannot touch him or kiss him, but she makes the sign of the cross over him, kisses her hand, crosses herself, and hurries out, closing the door very softly behind her.

ACT II

A week has elapsed. Bruno is buried, and his death from natural causes duly certified. Jitta has taken refuge in an illness, and is keeping her bed. Her husband, Professor Alfred Lenkheim, is sitting in his study after lunch with young Dr Fessler, who is engaged to Bruno's daughter Edith. Alfred lacks the distinction and heroic touch of Bruno, but prosaic as he certainly is, he is saved from being common, if not from being a little comic, by the stamp put upon him as a man of learning by his university training and his professorial Chair. His age is between forty and fifty. Fessler is just an ordinary nice-looking young doctor.

The room has two doors; one, in the middle of the wall behind the two men, opening on the corridor, the other, on their left, leading to an inner room. The window faces the inner door from the opposite side, and there is a window-seat before it. At right angles to this window-seat, further up the room, is a sofa. There are two tables: one a writing-table on the side near the window, at which the professor is sitting, and the other a round table on the side near the inner door. There is a chair at it with its back to the wall in which the entrance door is, and another, in which Dr Fessler is sitting, between it and the writing-table. The walls are crowded with book-shelves, and the writing-table is leaped

with examination papers and manuscripts

LENKHEIM Whats the matter? Going asleep at your age! You were not called up last night, were you?

FESSLER No But, by Jimminy, Lenkheim, I have gone through a lot this last week

LENKHEIM How?

FESSLER Just consider Imagine having to console Bruno's widow when I'm engaged to his daughter!

LENKHEIM Why not?

FESSLER Because theyre at daggers drawn Every word that soothes old Agnes is an outrage to Edith

LENKHEIM Why? Whats wrong between them?

FESSLER Oh, Mrs Haldenstedt is old-fashioned She keeps up the convention that because Edith is a young unmarried woman she cant possibly understand about her father's death, and Edith has to pretend to be in the dark. But of course she knows as well as you or I, and it maddens her to have to hold her tongue and be treated like a child when all her feelings are boiling over about it She was very fond of her father

LENKHEIM I knew the mother and daughter never got on very well together—jealousy, I suppose, as usual—but I thought this awful business would have brought them together

FESSLER Not a bit It has set them more against one another than ever

LENKHEIM I suppose theyve no notion who the woman was?

FESSLER None She will never be found out unless she comes forward herself

LENKHEIM She wont do that. Why should she give herself away?

FESSLER Women do, sometimes, God knows why! But meanwhile, poor Mrs Haldenstedt is most frightfully cut up There she is, distracted by all sorts of surmises and suspicions, not knowing what to think, asking herself every minute whether he went on the loose and died in a vulgar street adventure, or whether there was somebody all along whom she never suspected, making her marriage a mockery We are all as much in the dark as she is, for there never was a word against him he seemed the correctest, most domesticated of men. That is, unless you know anything You were so intimate with him, you know.

LENKHEIM Was I really intimate with him? Certainly we were friends at college, and we

kept it up afterwards But he never told me much about himself

FESSLER He was not that sort of man But he trusted nobody in the world as he trusted you the widow is dead certain of that By the way, she asked me to prepare you for a visit she is going to pay you

LENKHEIM Why should you prepare me?

FESSLER Well, she is going to ask you to act as his scientific and literary executor

LENKHEIM [*pleasantly surprised and suddenly self-conscious*] Really! Of course I shall be delighted I may tell you that in my own will I made him my literary executor Who would have thought that he would peg out first?

FESSLER But didnt you know that he was ill?

LENKHEIM Oh, I knew about his heart and so forth But many a patient with heart disease lives to bury his doctor As a matter of fact his case was not a very serious one. His heart would not have stood racing up two or three flights of stairs But does any man of his age race upstairs? A very strong emotion or excitement might have killed him, but a settled married man with a wife and a grown-up daughter suffers more from too little excitement than from too much What emotions has a domesticated man of science to fear after forty?

FESSLER Then why did he die?

LENKHEIM Just so why did he die? He wouldnt have died if he had been leading the quiet life we all gave him credit for What sort of life did he really lead? That is the question

FESSLER Isnt it shocking that such a man should die under such—such—well, such shady circumstances?

LENKHEIM Shady! I should call them disgraceful Yes, my dear boy, we must face it he came to a disgraceful end An operatic tenor, or even a literary man, might be forgiven for dying in an adventure of that kind. But a man of science! Unfortunate, to say the least most unfortunate

FESSLER At all events, since it was his luck to die in the dark, we are not called on to light the candle, are we?

LENKHEIM We are not, but what about the police? And what about his wife?

FESSLER They havnt the ghost of a clue

LENKHEIM It wont upset or delay your engagement, I hope. Not that I could blame you if you broke it off Still—

FESSLER *I break it off!* Good gracious, no!
LENKHEIM I'm glad of that. Of course you must keep it up to Edith that there was nothing wrong.

FESSLER. But she wont have it that there was nothing wrong.

LENKHEIM What!

FESSLER You see, she adored her father. She sees him with a halo round his head, and nothing that he could do would be wrong for her. She has always felt that her mother could not live up to him, and she is persuading herself that this unknown woman was some wonderful person who made him as happy as she thinks he deserved to be.

LENKHEIM Thats funny. Very funny. Does she suspect anybody?

FESSLER. I dont know. I cant see through her; and the worst of it is, she can see through me. She will find out what I think.

LENKHEIM Which is?

FESSLER Well, just what you think. And when she finds out what that is, heaven help me!

LENKHEIM She wont find out. All that a young girl sees in a death is the romance of it. The vulgar reality does not exist for her. What an eye-opener for us who know better! [*Sententiously*] And yet, whatever view we may take of the affair, we must admit that these moral problems are very difficult in fact, insoluble. Is there any man who can say that he has never been in a position in which sudden death would have been extremely embarrassing?

FESSLER I suppose not. [*Naïvely*] By the way, that reminds me that I forgot to ask how Mrs Lenkheim is.

LENKHEIM Oh, Jitta is getting over it. She hopes to be able to get up for a couple of hours today. Just in a dressing-gown, you know, to sit about a bit.

FESSLER Oh, good. Well, I must be off to the hospital. [*He rises*] Tell her I asked after her.

LENKHEIM [*Rising*] I will. How soon do you think I may expect the Haldenstedts?

FESSLER Any time now, I should think. The old girl wont be easy until she has seen you.

Lenkheim goes out for a moment through the inner door. Jitta comes in, languid, and dressed as Lenkheim has described.

JITTA Oh, so glad youve come, Doctor. [*She shakes hands with Fessler*]. Have you seen the Haldenstedts? I was so sorry not to be able to call on them. I have been really

too ill. I hope they know that.

FESSLER [*with affectionate deference*] They thoroughly understand that. You must take the greatest care of yourself.

JITTA You are not running away, are you?

FESSLER I must. I have to be at the hospital; and I am late already.

JITTA Come again soon, Doctor.

FESSLER I hope to find you quite well then, dear lady.

He kisses her hand, and goes out. When he has gone, Lenkheim returns, full of excitement and curiosity.

LENKHEIM Jitta old Agnes is coming to see us. Bruno has made me his literary executor. That is what she is coming about.

JITTA Has she recovered enough to bear discussing it with you?

LENKHEIM She must. The world doesnt stand still when people die. I wonder what we shall find in his papers!

JITTA [*going white*] Has she found anything?

LENKHEIM Yes, didnt I tell you? He has made me his scientific and literary executor.

JITTA I mean about—about—

LENKHEIM About his death? Absolutely nothing. Fessler has just told me so.

JITTA [*sitting down at the table, reassured*] Poor Fessler!

LENKHEIM [*resuming his seat at his writing-table*] Yes, poor chap. He is rather in a fright about Edith.

JITTA Why?

LENKHEIM He is afraid that her grief for her father will kill her feeling for him, so youd better take Edith in hand. You know how she clings to you. She is like her father in that. He clung to you.

JITTA. To me!

LENKHEIM Yes, you know very well he did. If I had died you would have been up before this, I expect.

JITTA Alfred, if you begin nagging I shall have to go back to bed.

LENKHEIM Who's nagging? [*She rises. He jumps up apprehensively*] There now, for God's sake dont make a scene about nothing. All I meant was that if he ever told anything to anybody he would have told it to you. [*She sits down again*]. Jitta, have you really no suspicion?

JITTA Of what?

LENKHEIM. Who the woman was.

JITTA How could he tell anyone who she was? It would have been dishonorable to

betray her

LENKHEIM Men do tell, all the same 'They dont tell the newspapers, but they tell other women

JITTA I object to be classed with "other women"

LENKHEIM Oh well, it's no use talking to you if you will be so touchy I didnt suggest that he told you you brought that in yourself All that was in my mind was that as you were so much in and out of his house you must have met her one time or another if she was the wife of any of his friends It usually is a friend's wife

JITTA [*with affected listlessness*] Is it?

LENKHEIM Well, it stands to reason, doesnt it? Unless it's a chance woman from the streets

JITTA [*wincing*] I suppose so

LENKHEIM Did he never talk to you about love, or anything of that sort?

JITTA The last time we were at the theatre he discussed the play with me It was a play about love

LENKHEIM Well, what else would a play be about? Thats no clue I wonder was she a patient of his?

JITTA Does it matter? Need we gossip about it?

LENKHEIM [*impatiently*] Dont be so superior I like gossip Everybody likes gossip You like it yourself as well as anybody If she was a patient that would account for his being so reserved about her

JITTA Alfred you are unbearable I will go back to bed

She rises and makes for the door, but is checked by the entrance of Agnes Haldenstedt and her daughter, both in deep mourning Agnes carries a small dispatch case She is not really much older than Jitta, but she has retired so completely from the competition of women in attractiveness, and accepted so fully her lot as a good bourgeoisie with a home to keep and a family to manage on a slender income that she is set down as much older and less distinguished socially Her sense of duty has kept her upright, and her uprightness has given her a certain authority, as of a person of some consequence She has been deeply wounded by the circumstances of her husband's death, and is stiff and suspicious in her manner.

Her daughter is young and ingenuous, with a strong character A passion of grief for her father has set her on fire with pride and a sense of being ready for any sacrifice

The conversation which ensues is solemn, artificial, and constrained They condole with one another in low tones and unnaturally bookish sentences Jitta has to draw the girl to her, and kiss her on the brow Alfred leads Mrs Haldenstedt to the sofa When she sits down, he sits on the window-seat near her Jitta leads Edith to the chair she has just vacated, and goes to the sofa, where she seats herself on the widow's left

All these movements are ridiculous, yet the mourning worn by the two visitors makes them seem, if not natural, at least becoming

LENKHEIM [*in hollow tones*] May I say again, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, how deeply I—

JITTA [*gushing*] At last, dearest Mrs Haldenstedt, I am able to tell you what I felt when I lay helpless, unable to pay the last respects to our dear lost friend [*As she sits down, she seizes the hands of Mrs Haldenstedt, giving her no opportunity of refusing the attention*] But in my sick room I was with you in spirit Indeed I have never been closer to you and poor Edith than in that moment when I had to ask my husband to tell you what it cost me to stay away

AGNES [*not at all disposed to allow Jitta so prominent a share in her grief, but conventionally resorting to her handkerchief*] Thank you I'm sure it's very kind of you

LENKHEIM [*clearing his throat and sniffing*] Under such a sudden blow, what can we say? We are all struck dumb We all share your grief

AGNES When people are sick, and we can sacrifice ourselves completely to the duty of nursing them when they can lean on us to the very last, then, when the parting comes, there is some consolation in the thought that we have done all in our power But an end like this, so sudden, so dreadful— [*she breaks down*]

LENKHEIM [*making the best of it*] Still, I am not sure that a lingering death really spares the feelings of the survivors Death often tortures its victims before it strikes the final blow In your case, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, there was at least no torture

AGNES [*staring at him*] No torture! What has the future for me but the torture of a widow's grief?

EDITH [*unsympathetic*] It has the honor of father's name Is that nothing?

LENKHEIM [*effusively*] Which I will help you both to uphold, my dear Edith, believe me

AGNES. He knew he could depend on you.

I have a packet of papers marked "Professor Lenkheim's property to be given into his own hands" that is why I have come today instead of waiting for Mrs Lenkheim to call

LENKHEIM Dear fellow how conscientious of him! such papers as he had of mine were of no consequence Shall we have a little quiet talk all to ourselves, in here? [*He rises and crosses the room, inviting her, by a gesture, to come with him through the door opposite the window*]

AGNES [*pausing between Jitta and Edith*] I wanted to come alone but Edith insisted on coming with me

LENKHEIM She was quite right She is now your only support

EDITH [*proudly*] Thank you, Professor I wish you could persuade my mother that I could do much more for her if she would tell me all her troubles I am no longer a child There is nothing now that cannot be spoken of quite frankly before me

AGNES [*with a neary smile*] Of course not, dear But there are things it is better not to know I know them; and I only wish I could change places with you

Emphasizing this with an emphatic nod at Edith, she goes into the next room Lenkheim follows her

JITTA [*throwing off her false manner, whilst retaining the patronizing suavity of an older woman to a younger one, holds out her hands to Edith with genuine sympathy*] Come, darling [*Edith comes to her and takes her hands*] Sit here, close to me [*She makes room for her on the sofa beside her. Edith sits down on her left, and looks gratefully and longingly into her eyes*] Do you remember when we were last here together? Your father brought you He was radiant with joy and pride in you We were all so happy

EDITH [*thoughtfully*] How long was that ago?

JITTA Barely three weeks

EDITH It seems an age I was a child then I can hardly remember how I felt It is as if I had been asleep

JITTA Your father's death has awakened you you are looking at life for the first time

EDITH I have been looking at death for the first time

JITTA My poor child! But dont lose courage Life lies before you. it will make up to you for many sorrows You will get over it, Edith

EDITH Why should I get over it? I dont want to get over it Do you suppose I feel

disgraced?

JITTA Oh no, no of course not But such a grief as this always makes us feel that we have come to the end of everything that nothing can ever be the same again Yet next day we find ourselves at the beginning of everything instead

EDITH [*impatient*] You need not speak to me like that You know very well that what is the matter is not merely the loss of a father. a thing that happens to everybody sooner or later

JITTA [*taken aback*] Edith, dear—

EDITH [*downright and indignant*] Why do you treat me as if I were a little girl, as my mother does? I did not expect it from you Oh, I am so tired of all this humbug. I turned to you because I hoped you would understand me, and let me open my heart to you like a friend

JITTA My dear: I will be an elder sister to you—

EDITH [*fiercely*] I said a friend

JITTA [*surrendering*] Oh, you are terrible I will be everything you want, if I can But why are you angry with me? I really meant what I said Life has a great deal to offer you dont forget that you are going to be married. I believe you can trust your man He adored your father He will regard you as a sacred legacy

EDITH Thats curious He used that word himself the day we buried poor papa But I dont intend to be taken as a legacy, sacred or not

JITTA Edith he feels your loss as deeply as you do yourself Some of us perhaps feel it more deeply, because we have more experience of men, and know how much better what he was than you are yet old enough to know.

EDITH [*rising and pacing restlessly across the room*] Oh, these commonplaces! How you keep throwing them at me! None of us know what my father was. he was thrown away among us [*Turning on Jitta*] Why did he not die with us? Why had he no last word for us? I was nothing to him. none of us were anything to him

JITTA. You know, dear, that you are unjust to him when you say so.

EDITH Unjust! unjust! what has that to do with it? Why did he not come to us for help, for nursing, for care?

JITTA. He was too considerate to let you

know how ill he was

EDITH He told everyone else We were left in the dark

JITTA No, no No one knew it except himself

EDITH [*passionately*] My mother wont speak to me about it, but I know very well what she is thinking They whisper all day at home I see it in the eyes of the visitors, and it makes me furious I never want to see anyone cry again as my mother cried that night when they brought him home It wasnt only grief there was a bitterness in her that had nothing to do with grief or love I have often felt in my soul that papa never found in his home what he needed and longed for There were moments when I somehow got beyond myself and became another person; perhaps the woman I am growing into, and he was so responsive to that flash of something different in me, so grateful for it, that I saw quite plainly how he was longing for something else, something more, than we were giving him We were not good enough for him [*She throws herself into the chair beside the round table, sobbing*]

JITTA [*rising and going to her*] Dearest dont cry like that

EDITH It nearly killed me to see him sitting there, as he often did, staring right through me without seeing me, and sighing as he drew his hand across his eyes and through his hair

JITTA Dear child you must not worry yourself because he sometimes looked straight at you and did not see you Just think. He was a doctor he knew his danger better than anyone When a man finds himself condemned to death, his thoughts and feelings must be overwhelming Well, if you were looking at the sea in a storm or at the heavens opening above it, would you see a tiny figure on the shore, even if it were your own child?

EDITH [*rising in a girlish rapture*] Thank you for that it is beautiful, and quite true [*She closes her eyes, silent for a moment, and a little breathless Jitta smiles, and sits down in the writing-table chair*] And now, wont you help me to find out the secret of his death?

JITTA What secret?

EDITH Who is the woman in whose arms my father died?

JITTA [*startled*] So that is what you think! Poor child!

EDITH [*angry*] I do not think it I know it You know it Please let us have no more of the poor child business it does not impose on me How am I to find her?

JITTA [*remonstrating*] Edith, Edith, what could you say to her, even if you found her?

EDITH Only that I love her

JITTA Love her! What for?

EDITH For making my father happy [*Restless again, pacing up and down*] Oh, if you knew how infamously all those people who call on us misunderstand him They insult my mother by condoling with her on her husband's unfaithfulness They insult God by declaring that my father threw himself into the gutter, and was justly punished for it

JITTA [*springing up*] What! They dare say such brutal things!

EDITH Oh, not in those words they are too polite to speak as horribly as they think, but I know And my mother encourages them She actually likes to feel that some unheard-of disgrace has fallen on her She thinks it makes her interesting and revenges her She positively wallows in it

JITTA [*shocked*] Edith!

EDITH Oh, it is the right word for it why should I not use it? She never thinks of his sorrows only of her own.

JITTA [*taking her arm persuasively*] My dear you mustnt go on like this Come let me talk to you quietly [*She draws her back to the sofa, and makes her sit down again*] If you loved your mother as you loved your father, you would be kinder to her You think of him as a man whose wife has failed him Dont forget that she is a woman whose husband failed her.

EDITH How did he fail her? If she had been worthy of him—

JITTA Yes, yes, dear, but she was not worthy of him Or stop no we have no right to say that

EDITH We have a right to say that she was not the right woman for him

JITTA Yes, but dont forget that that means that he was not the right man for her He was her superior if you like, but that only made it worse for her His superiority must often have wounded her self-respect, and as any weakness of his flattered it, she perhaps likes to think that he was not quite perfect, and even that he treated her badly

EDITH You think that an excuse for her!

I call it abominable

JITTA. Dont be impossible, dear Abominable or not, it explains her readiness to believe the worst. You must not blame her because your faith in him is greater, and your consolation nobler. Remember he did not betray you as he betrayed her For he did betray her, and so did that woman Tell yourself that, Edith, whenever you feel tempted to hate your mother Promise me you will

EDITH I will never tell myself such a silly lie I will take my father's memory and good name out of my mother's hands, and out of the hands of her tittle-tattling friends I will make the world see him as he was, and as I loved him, not as she sees him, and as she hates him

JITTA The world will see him with its own eyes, dear, not with yours All you can do is to save his memory from being blackened by that odious thing, a family quarrel Come! promise me to stop worrying about your mother?

EDITH I am not worrying about her: I am worrying about the woman my father loved I cannot help it she is always in my mind. Why was she not with him when they found him? Why did she run away like a criminal?

JITTA Perhaps she is asking herself those questions every day in her shame and misery. Oh, Edith, we dont know what meannesses we are capable of until we are tried The dread of a public scandal—of having to face a policeman prying into the most sacred and secret places in her soul—will drive a woman to anything Remember. she had not only to save herself from the scandal, but his memory as well

EDITH. No, no, no She did not save him She left him under the stigma of having died in the arms of some vile creature. I know in my soul that she was not that The world would forgive him if it knew that she is what I know she must be if he loved her Oh, why does she not defy all the silly world for his sake, and say "It was I."

JITTA. You ask too much from her She may have been capable of great things when he was alive and at her side What is the poor wretch now but a broken-hearted lonely coward?

EDITH She is not broken-hearted. my father never broke any woman's heart. I loved him; and that makes even his death a

glory to me If she is lonely why does she not come to me? She shall come to me We shall cure one another's loneliness, we two Where is she to cry her heart out if not in my arms?

JITTA No she slunk away into the darkness Let her be She can bleed to death in her hiding-place

EDITH. She shall not she will be drawn to me you will see Remember that I have no longer any place at home I cannot live with people who cannot feel about my father as I do, and there is only one such person in the world

JITTA That woman?

EDITH Yes I will give her every right over me that the woman who returned my father's love should have over his daughter the right I deny to my mother I swear it

JITTA How serious you are, Edith! But what will your mother say, and the man you are engaged to?

EDITH My mother would never understand. I take nothing from her that she is capable of missing As to the man who says he loves me, and asks me to share my whole life with him, if he cannot understand me and support me in this he will never have me for a wife I can do without any man if I can find the woman to whom I am bound for ever and ever You will help me to find her, will you not?

JITTA [*deeply moved, drawing Edith to her*] Oh, dailing, darling, if only I could! If only I dared!

Lenkheim throws the door open he is returning with Agnes Jitta and Edith move asunder and rise hastily Agnes comes in, drying her eyes with her handkerchief Lenkheim follows her solemnly with her dispatch case in his hand

EDITH [*stamping*] Oh, bother! Always at the wrong moment Always spoiling everything [*She turns impatiently to the window, and stands with her back to them, fuming*]

AGNES [*to Alfred*] Thank God I found strength for this. It is a great relief to me But I am dead tired I must go home [*To Edith*] Come, child

JITTA Wont you sit down and rest for a moment?

AGNES Thank you, but I shall be better at home And I have so many accounts to settle

LENKHEIM Ah, yes, yes, of course you have Well, if you must go, you must And you may depend on me not to keep you waiting too long before I go to work on the scientific

papers

JITTA I hope to be allowed to go out again in a day or two May I come to see you if the doctor says I may?

AGNES Do, of course I shall expect you [*To Lenkheim*] You will forgive me, wont you, all the trouble I am giving you? It has done me so much good to unburden myself to a real friend

LENKHEIM You have had a cruel experience, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, but we must all resign ourselves to our trials

AGNES Yes I suppose that is a great consolation

EDITH My consolation is that nobody dares console me

ALFRED [*pompously*] Proud words, and how true! how true! [*Unclenching, as he shakes her hand*] Goodbye, dear lady, good-bye

AGNES Goodbye [*To Edith, laughing a little maliciously*] Since you are so strong, child, just give me your arm

JITTA [*shaking hands*] Goodbye

Edith goes out with her mother leaning heavily on her Jitta goes out with them

LENKHEIM [*relieved at being rid of the widow*] Out! [*He carries the dispatch case to his writing-table, and sits down to examine its contents*] He is in no hurry It contains nothing but the manuscript of a biggish book He leans lazily back with his legs stretched, and turns over the cover without looking at it He reads a bit, and makes a wry face He disagrees intensely and contemptuously with every passage he reads, abandoning each with sniffs and pishes, only to be still more disgusted with the next

Jitta returns, sees what he is doing, and halts between him and the round table, silently watching him

Finally he gives the book up as hopeless, shuts up the pages, and stares at the mass of manuscript as if wondering what he is to do with such trash Suddenly his expression changes His eyes bulge in amazement

ALFRED [*after a stifled exclamation*] Jitta! Jitta! [*He turns, half rising, and sees her*] Oh, you're there

JITTA What is the matter? [*knowing only too well, and very angry at his contemptuous air, but pretending to be listless and languid*]

LENKHEIM [*showing her the manuscript*] Look at this!

JITTA Well?

LENKHEIM Look at the title

JITTA [*reading*] "Fetters of the Feminine

Psyche" Is that the book you worked on with him?

LENKHEIM I! Certainly not he wrote it all himself I only gave him his facts Read the next line.

JITTA [*reading*] "By Alfred Lenkheim" I suppose he meant you to finish it

LENKHEIM [*turning over to the end*] But it is finished Look Was he mad? Did he suppose I would condescend to put my name to another man's work? I have some reputation of my own to fall back on, thank God There is something behind this

JITTA I suppose he wished to leave you something valuable as a keepsake You were his friend

LENKHEIM [*scornfully*] A keepsake! Dont talk nonsense, Jitta a man does not give away his biggest work as if it were his diamond pin, unless he is afraid to put his own name to it But if he thinks he is going to put mine to his trash he is greatly mistaken

JITTA [*boiling with rage, pointing to the manuscript*] He has sacrificed his immortality for your benefit.

LENKHEIM [*angrily*] Rot Why should he? Nobody who can create sacrifices his creation [*He throws the manuscript on the table*] Not that he ever pretended to think much of the book

JITTA [*indignantly*] He thought the world of it It was his greatest pride

LENKHEIM [*turning on her, a suspicion flashing on him*] How do you know?

JITTA [*checking herself, feeling that her temper has betrayed her*] He often spoke to me about this book, and about the hopes he had built on it

LENKHEIM To you! What do you know about psychiatry? Why should he sacrifice his reputation to add to mine? quite unnecessarily

JITTA The whim of an invalid, I suppose

LENKHEIM [*out of patience*] Whim! He throws away his one chance of notoriety, and you call that a whim Do you take me for a fool?

JITTA Dont shout, Alfred, please

ALFRED [*subsiding a little*] I'm not shouting I'm asking you to talk sense You say he spoke to you about this What did he tell you?

JITTA Of course I knew too little of the work you and he were doing together to be able to help or understand much [*Decisively*] But in any case you must carry out his

wishes.

LENKHEIM What wishes?

JITTA You must accept what he has left you

LENKHEIM Why must I?

JITTA It was his last wish: we have no choice

LENKHEIM We! Me, you mean. What have you to do with it?

JITTA Well, you if you like

LENKHEIM It's not me you're thinking of. Funny, the way women run after a dead man if only he dies romantically! Anyhow this thing is impossible. I won't do it.

JITTA Why?

LENKHEIM Because it would be nothing short of swindling the scientific world to pass off his stuff on it as mine—that's why. And now, what the deuce am I to say to old Agnes? [Grumbling] Such an unreasonable thing to ask me to do! Such an ungrateful thing!

JITTA Was it ungrateful to give you the whole credit when you were only his collaborator?

LENKHEIM Collaborator! What are you talking about? He knew as well as I did that I was only waiting for the publication of his idiotic theory to tear it to pieces. You don't suppose I believe in it, do you?

JITTA Then perhaps that was what he wanted to prevent.

LENKHEIM. Jitta, you are simply drivelling. Bruno was too jolly conceited to be afraid of me. Don't be childish.

JITTA [irritably] I am like yourself. I am only trying to guess why he did it.

LENKHEIM Just so. Why did he do it? Where is the sense in it? I believe you know, Jitta.

JITTA Really, Alfred—I must go back to bed.

LENKHEIM You haven't been up an hour.

JITTA But I am dead tired.

LENKHEIM You can't be as tired as all that. What do you want to run away for?

JITTA Have you forgotten that I am ill? I can hardly stand. I must lie down.

ALFRED Well, lie on the sofa.

JITTA. Don't be brutal, Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Bosh! You are hiding something from me. I haven't experimented with psycho-analysis for nothing. I notice that this crazy thing that bothers me doesn't bother you. You understand it; you couldn't take it so quietly if you didn't.

JITTA I take it without shouting, if that is what you mean.

LENKHEIM What did he say to you about the book and about his hopes? Why did you never say a word about them to me?

JITTA I never thought about it.

LENKHEIM If you had never thought about it you would have talked to me about it.

JITTA I suppose I did not think it worth mentioning.

LENKHEIM Psha! Would a man who told you all that not tell you plenty of other things? That love affair, now—?

JITTA [shrinking] Oh, Alfred!

LENKHEIM. Oh, stuff! Who was the woman? You know all about her. I can see it in your eyes. [He takes her by the shoulders and turns her face to face]. Aha! You know who she was. You know all about it.

JITTA [rising indignantly and letting herself go] You are mad, and grossly rude.

LENKHEIM [rising also] I have had enough of being humbugged. Who was she?

JITTA [closes her lips obstinately]!

LENKHEIM. Was he so much to you that you will not give the other woman away, even to me, your husband? Were those his orders?

JITTA [exhausted] I have no orders. I go my own way. [she attempts to leave the room]

LENKHEIM [intercepting her] You shan't run away. If you don't tell me who she is, I will—I will—[he makes a threatening gesture, not very convincingly]

JITTA Take care, Alfred. Your cunning is only a fool's cunning after all. The answer to your question is staring you in the face. Thank your stars you are too stupid to see it.

LENKHEIM. Am I? We shall see. Before you leave this room I will find out the part you played in this dirty business.

JITTA [starting as from the lash of a whip] Dirty! Oh, never was anything purer, holier, nobler.

LENKHEIM [screaming] Ah! It was you! There was no other woman—it was you, you. He bought you from me, for that. [he bangs his fist on the manuscript] The damned thief! [He collapses into his chair at the table, clasping his head in his hands]

JITTA [sitting down wearily on the sofa] Leave the dead in peace. If you cannot hold your tongue, abuse me. I am alive, and can feel it.

LENKHEIM [miserably] You don't even deny it!

JITTA No Are you surprised? You lost me long ago

LENKHEIM My fault, of course You worthless devil what do you expect me to think of you?

JITTA You can think what you like, Alfred I dont grudge you that melancholy satisfaction

LENKHEIM Have you no conscience, no shame?

JITTA Do you want me to make a scene for you, Alfred? I am sorry I am too tired

LENKHEIM If I had him here—

JITTA Threaten him to your heart's content. He is dead

ALFRED Yes, but I am very much alive Dont forget that

JITTA Not so very much alive, Alfred

ALFRED Yah [*gnashes his teeth with rage*]!

JITTA However, what I enjoyed I shall have to pay for I know that

LENKHEIM You and he were lovers?

JITTA [*proudly*] Yes you have found the right word at last Lovers

LENKHEIM [*whining pitably*] And you could live in the house with me, and take my care and my nursing and my money, and even— [*He looks at her and chokes*] How long has this affair been going on?

JITTA Our love has lasted three years

LENKHEIM Love! Love in the sort of house he was found dead in!

JITTA Love wherever we were And wherever we were was paradise Does that give you any idea of his greatness?

LENKHEIM Of your meanness, more likely Dont try to stuff me with big words they only shew that you wont confess your caddishness even to yourself

JITTA [*rising*] Oh, please! I cut a pretty contemptible figure—

LENKHEIM [*triumphing*] You do You do

JITTA [*continuing*]—beside him

LENKHEIM [*rising, goaded beyond endurance threatening her*] You take care, do you hear?

JITTA [*wringing her hands*] My place was at his side They should have had to tear me away from him by force Yes, and I will tell you something more The last beat of his heart would have broken mine if I had been any good But I am no good, and here I am, as you see me Oh, you are quite right I have no right to be in any decent house [*she turns to the door*]

LENKHEIM Stop where are you going?

JITTA I dont know Into the streets, I suppose

LENKHEIM Oh, damn your heroics! You shant leave this room until you have told me everything

JITTA [*bitterly*] Dont you know enough already?

LENKHEIM [*pointing to the manuscript*] What does that title-page mean?

JITTA You know You have said what it means

LENKHEIM I want to know what he said

JITTA That you are to be the father to his orphaned book That the same it will bring you will make amends to you—for me

LENKHEIM 'The blackguard' Not content with stealing you from me, he must dictate the rest of my life to me, as if I were a child

JITTA Yes compared to him you are a child He has provided for you

LENKHEIM Ha! And were you equally kind and thoughtful for his wife, eh?

JITTA [*earnestly*] Alfred it was too strong for us

LENKHEIM What was too strong for you?

JITTA Love You dont understand love Have you anything else to say to me?

LENKHEIM No [*He turns his back on her, and goes sulkily to the window*]

JITTA Goodbye [*She tries to go, but suddenly becomes weak, and reels against the head of the sofa*] Alfred

LENKHEIM Whats the matter? [*He runs to her, and gets her safely seated*]

JITTA Dont mind, Alfred I shall be better soon it is passing

LENKHEIM [*turning brusquely from her like an angry child*] I am not sympathizing with you It serves you right [*He sits down at the round table, with his elbows on it, muttering and sulking*] Treated me disgracefully Disgracefully

JITTA [*sighs wearily*]!!

LENKHEIM [*unaggressively*] Jitta?

Her name and the change in his tone give her a shock She turns and looks searchingly at him

LENKHEIM [*recovering his self-control by a rather broken effort*] This is no use I have come to my senses I—I will take it quietly and reasonably

JITTA I am glad you can I wish I could

LENKHEIM [*shaking his head*] But we cant leave it like this, can we?

JITTA What can we do, Alfred?

LENKHEIM You have done me harm

enough Do you want to ruin me as well?

JITTA It is I who am ruined, as you call it, is it not? The sin is mine I will pay the penalty by myself Your life is only beginning with that book you have a future I have only a past I will take it and myself out of your life [*She rises*]

LENKHEIM [*out of patience, jumping up*] Look here since you wont talk sense and be commonly civil to me, I'm going to assert myself You cant settle an affair like this by looking like a martyr and walking out into the street You must learn to consider other people a little If you have no regard for me, at least remember that Agnes and Edith have a future, and have a right not to have it spoiled For their sake I am prepared to endure your presence in my house.

JITTA [*with faint surprise and some irony*] You can bring yourself to that? You can still bear to look at me?

LENKHEIM Make no mistake: all is over between you and me. For ever I mean it.

JITTA. So do I

LENKHEIM. Very well. be it so But that does not mean that we need separate People can live miles apart under the same roof That is how you will have to live with me. If you have a spark of decent feeling left, you will not force a public scandal on me.

JITTA. Does it matter?

LENKHEIM. Does it matter! Are you utterly selfish? Dont you understand that if this miserable break-up of our marriage becomes known it will break up that poor woman's widowhood as well?

JITTA Does she matter so much?

LENKHEIM [*playing his ace*] Well, what about Edith? Doesnt she matter? Do you suppose Fessler can afford to marry her if you drag her family through the mud?

JITTA [*staggered*] Oh! I was not thinking, Alfred Give me until tomorrow to think it over I can bear no more today. I can hardly stand

LENKHEIM You can stand as well as I can [*She immediately sits down obstinately at the writing-table*] Very well, but stand or sit, you dont leave this room until you give me your word to stay.

JITTA With you?

LENKHEIM Yes, with me It is I who will have to pay the housekeeping bills But dont be afraid I am done with you, except before company Not one word will I ever speak to

you again when we are alone together.

JITTA Oh, Alfred, you will tell me so ten times a day Dont let us talk nonsense

LENKHEIM You will see Not one word Not a sound I tell you I am done with you; and I wish I had never met you

JITTA It sounds too good to be true, Alfred

LENKHEIM Psha!

JITTA. But that part of it rests with yourself [*Determinedly*] And now for my conditions

LENKHEIM Your conditions! Yours!!! You dare talk to me of conditions!

JITTA. You are in my hands, Alfred, and you know it I can give the whole scandal away if you defy me. I will not be unkind, but if I am to keep up appearances, you must keep them up too If I am to pretend to be a good woman, you must pretend to be a great man.

LENKHEIM. Pretend!

JITTA Oh, be a great man by all means, Alfred, if you can But you must pretend in any case

LENKHEIM How?

JITTA You will pretend to be the author of that great book That will be your share of the sham of our life together.

LENKHEIM But I tell you I dont believe a word of the silly thing

JITTA. Of course not If you had the genius to believe it, you would have had the genius to write it.

LENKHEIM [*goaded*] I—

JITTA [*continuing calmly*] You cannot believe it, just as I cannot believe that you will never speak to me again,—

LENKHEIM I never will.

JITTA [*still ignoring his protests*] —but you will come to believe every word of the silly thing, as you call it, when it makes Lenkheim as famous as Einstein.

LENKHEIM [*startled by the name*] Einstein! You are tempting me, you devil

JITTA You envied Einstein, Alfred Well, all that you envied him for is within your reach. Stretch out your hand, and take it

LENKHEIM And you envied Einstein's wife, did you? I see. Why could not your stupid husband give you a triumphant tour through Europe? Why should you not shake hands with all the kings, and dine with all the presidents, and have gala nights at the Opera? To get all that you will be my accomplice in a fraud, eh? Since you cannot

have a good time with him you will have one with me

JITTA [*round-eyed for a moment at this new light on her conduct*] How clever of you, Alfred! You have found a reason you can really believe in I should never have thought of it, but you are welcome to it if only you will father his book

LENKHEIM [*desperately perplexed yielding*] But, Jitta I dont really believe that It's not like you you are not clever enough, not ambitious enough What is your real reason?

JITTA [*decisively*] He wished it that is enough for me He knew better than either of us what is best for us

LENKHEIM Did he indeed, confound him!

JITTA He did indeed, Alfred, and I forbid you to confound him

LENKHEIM Well, if I do—and mind I dont say I will—I—

JITTA Yes?

LENKHEIM I will think it over

JITTA Just so, Alfred Goodnight [*She goes out, tranquilly convinced that she will have her own way*]

LENKHEIM [*rushing to the door in a last effort to assert himself, and shouting after her*] If you think—[*He peters out, thrusts his hands desperately into his pockets like a cleaned-out gambler, trots back irresolutely to his writing-table, takes up the MS, stares at it for a moment, and reads slowly*] "By Professor Alfred Lenkheim, Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Vienna" Well, I'm dashed!

ACT III

Mrs Haldenstedt is in her sitting-room with Alfred and Fessler, all three very busy going through the papers of her late husband She is feverishly reading letters, and tearing them up and throwing them into the waste-paper basket as they prove one after another to be of no interest Her sighs and exclamations of disappointment and impatience are getting on the nerves of Alfred, who is trying to read a manuscript He finches at the sharp sounds made by her violent tearing of the letters Fessler, who is sorting some papers which he has already gone through, is sympathetic, and looks pityingly at the widow from time to time

The room is lighted by a large bay window, with a window-seat under it The table heaped with papers is in this bay, and Mrs Haldenstedt sits at the head of it with her back to the light,

and Alfred and Fessler at the sides of it to her right and left respectively The corner of the room behind them on their right is cut off by a double door leading to the study Another door leading to the corridor of the flat is in the diagonally opposite corner, and is consequently before them on their left On their right between the window and the study door, a console stands against the wall, with flowers on it, and above it a convex mirror On the same side of the room, a couch

LENKHEIM [*unable to bear the noise any longer*] Do you mind my taking these manuscripts into the study and examining them there? They require a certain degree of quiet concentration

AGNES I am so sorry Bruno always said that it was like trying to work in a shooting gallery when I cleared up his papers and tore up useless letters But if you dont tear them what is there to prevent the servants and everyone else from reading them?

ALFRED Just so But why not leave the work to us? Why worry? Cant you trust us?

AGNES Oh, Professor, how can you ask me that? Of course I can trust you

LENKHEIM [*nodding*] Good Then do trust us [*He goes into the study, and shuts the door behind him*]

AGNES [*alone with Fessler, letting herself droop*] I have gone through this last batch of letters three times over in the hope of finding some clue But it's no use theres nothing

FESSLER You mustnt worry

AGNES [*sitting up sharply*] Have you ever lost anyone you really cared for?

FESSLER Well, my poor dear father—

AGNES I'm not talking about poor dear fathers or poor dear anybodies Bruno was none of your poor dears he was three quarters of my life, even if half of it was being his slave and his household drudge All the same, I cant spend my whole life doing nothing but grieving, can I?

FESSLER Just so Of course not

AGNES Life goes on, doesnt it? House-keeping goes on the future has to be thought for as well as the past All my business and responsibilities and duties go on just as if nothing had happened.

FESSLER I'm so glad you have recovered enough to be able to look at it in that way

AGNES Doctor Fessler a widow is not an invalid, and it doesnt help her to be treated

as one when the first shock is over

FESSLER Quite so Quite so

AGNES I am going to talk to you very seriously

FESSLER Of course Of course

AGNES And you are going to talk to me seriously, I hope

FESSLER [*surprised*] But certainly, my dear Mrs Haldenstedt

AGNES Yes, but that doesn't mean saying 'Certainly' and 'Of course' and 'Quite so quite so' to everything I say, as if you were soothing a baby

FESSLER [*protesting*] But I assure you I—

AGNES [*gripping his hand on the table*] Tell me the honest truth Did you consider Bruno a clever man?

FESSLER [*amazed*] Mrs Haldenstedt!!!

AGNES Do you think he had anything to say more than any of the rest of the professors? [*Stopping him as he opens his mouth for a fresh protest*] Now if you don't, please don't begin to excuse yourself and spare my feelings I've had enough of having my feelings spared I want the truth

FESSLER [*whole-heartedly*] My dear Mrs Haldenstedt, he was a great man His psychological doctrine was a revelation It was the beginning of a new epoch in science

AGNES So I have always understood I know he thought so himself

FESSLER [*indignant*] Oh no he was the most modest of men I am sure he never said so.

AGNES Do you think a man's wife knows nothing about his thoughts except what he tells?

FESSLER I am quite sure he did not know half his own greatness

AGNES Then will you tell me what has become of it all? You and Professor Lenkheim have gone through his papers with me Have we come across one word that could not have been written by an elementary schoolmaster?

FESSLER [*shaken a little*] Well, everything he wrote, even about trifles, has his peculiar touch

AGNES Everything he wrote is in his own handwriting, of course, if you mean that. But can you pick out from all that heap one single bit of paper which you could shew to a stranger and expect him to say "The man that wrote this must have been as great as Einstein"?

FESSLER Well, not exactly Einstein, perhaps. But— [*he stops*]

AGNES But what? Suppose he had left you a safe full of diamonds, and when you opened the safe it was empty!

FESSLER Oh, you exaggerate!

AGNES [*rising, out of patience*] Doctor Fessler if you can take neither me nor my husband's affairs seriously, I think you had better leave both alone

FESSLER [*rising, greatly surprised*] Have I offended you?

AGNES [*disarmed by his naïve sincerity*] No, no Never mind Never mind You are too young You are not used to women [*Sitting down again*] Sit down, won't you? I will talk to Professor Lenkheim about it He will understand

FESSLER [*standing stiffly, being now really offended*] By all means, Mrs Haldenstedt, though I really do not see what he can say more than I can.

AGNES There! You are offended But if you had been neglected as I have been for months past, while my husband spent hours and hours and hours in his study, writing, writing, writing, using up paper until it cost as much as the butter and eggs, you would want to know what had become of it all

FESSLER [*sitting down again with a gesture of apology*] True I should have thought of that

AGNES I never complained, because I thought it was a book that would make him famous and bring him in money Well, is that heap of old letters and bills and prescriptions all that came of it? Don't tell me: there is a book somewhere, and I want to know where it is Did he go mad and destroy it? If not, who took it from him? Did that woman?

FESSLER Good gracious, Mrs Haldenstedt!

AGNES Oh, this dreadful ending to all our happiness! It spoils everything that was nice in our lives. When the first and best of it was over and we settled down, troubles came I know; but I had my memories, and could sit and think of them Now they are all poisoned for me

FESSLER [*reflectively*] Dear Mrs Haldenstedt may I speak quite frankly to you?

AGNES Why, I am begging and praying you to But I can get nothing out of you but sympathy, as if you were only a visitor instead of going to marry my daughter

FESSLER You see, though your husband will be remembered as a great psychologist, he had to practise as a doctor to make a

living Well, the wickedest and worst people have to stay in doctors just as often as respectable people, and a doctor cant have them coming to his own house where his wife and daughter are He has to keep a consulting room somewhere where they can come. The landlady said he rented the room to see his friends in occasionally I daresay the women he saw there were common women, but how do you know that they were not his patients?

AGNES Dont deceive yourself, and dont try to deceive me Whatever I may have said when I was upset, I knew very well all along that Bruno never went with common women from the streets The landlady said it was always the same woman, and that she was a lady When she ran away she took that book with her you mark my words [*She rises and goes moodily to the console*]

They are interrupted by Lenkheim, who opens the door of the study and trots in flourishing a manuscript

LENKHEIM See here!

AGNES The book!

LENKHEIM I have just found an unfinished lecture on varieties of sleep

AGNES [*disappointed*] Only a lecture! [*Taking the manuscript*] Why, it's only six pages And what can it mean? There is only one sort of sleep

LENKHEIM Not at all He says that hardly any two people sleep in the same way Every case is an individual one You must read it, Fessler

FESSLER [*eagerly*] How interesting! May I look? [*Taking it from Mrs Haldenstedt*] Thank you I'll read it in the study [*To Alfred*] Mrs Haldenstedt wants to speak to you [*He hurries into the study*]

AGNES [*shaking her head*] You see, Professor, it doesnt account for anything

LENKHEIM What doesnt?

AGNES The lecture about sleep He could have written it in one evening Thats not the book that he said might be my best insurance policy It was part of his provision for me He would never have given it to another woman If she has it, she stole it [*She sits down on the couch*]

LENKHEIM You are still worrying about that woman I shouldnt if I were you [*He takes his former chair, drawing it from the table to the couch*]

AGNES I shall worry about her until I find

out who she is And I will find her out some day

LENKHEIM If it is any comfort to you, you may take my word for it that with all his professional engagements it was utterly impossible for him to have given much of his time to any woman

AGNES What comfort is there in that? One hour is enough for a man Then he can sit alone at his desk, thinking he is writing some great scientific work, when all the time he is thinking of her, living the hour over again, and looking forward to the next one, right in his wife's face

LENKHEIM [*very uncomfortable*] Mrs Haldenstedt do you suspect anybody?

AGNES I cant see anything clearly I thought I knew everybody that it could possibly be, but there's nobody All I know is what he liked and what he wanted, and how easily he could get it by lifting up his little finger Oh, I know exactly how he deceived us

LENKHEIM [*rising, startled*] Us!

AGNES Well, me and Edith, of course

LENKHEIM [*sitting down, relieved*] Oh! Just so

AGNES She wasnt what you think she was, Professor she was one of us And I say that when a man has a wife and children and a home and a good position, he should think twice before asking any respectable woman to meet him in such a room in such a house It was fit neither for him nor for her

LENKHEIM [*drawing a little closer to her*] Dear lady may I ask you a very indiscreet question? I shall not be in the least offended if you refuse to answer it

AGNES What is it?

LENKHEIM Was your marriage a happy one?

AGNES I always thought it was, at least until the last few years. Then there was a sudden change Up to that time he was full of interest in his home, in Edith's education, in our plans, our money, the chance of our being able to move into a better house, the furniture and pictures, in everything Then he seemed to get beyond us somehow

LENKHEIM What were the symptoms?

AGNES Well, he was sometimes very irritable, though he used to be a perfect lamb I thought it was only his health, for of course neither of us was growing younger I know better now Oh, what a fool I was! But that

is how things happen They go on from year to year under your very nose, staring you in the face, and you never notice, never think, because your mind is off the track And then suddenly your eyes are opened with a bang; and you could kill yourself for having been so blind If I could only find out who she was' [*She rises restlessly*]

LENKHEIM Mrs Haldenstedt. take my advice give it up What is the use of tormenting yourself? You will have no peace until you put that woman out of your head

AGNES I dont want peace I want to find her out

LENKHEIM [*rising*] But suppose you do find her What then? Think of the scandal. Believe me, it's better not to know You could not hurt her without hurting yourself and Edith worse.

AGNES I dont want to make a scandal, and I dont want to hurt her I want to find out from her what sort of life Bruno was really leading, and what has become of all that work he did

LENKHEIM But the lecture on varieties of sleep—

AGNES. Stuff! I know the variety of sleep he learnt from her [*Looking at him queerly*] Why do you want to prevent me from finding her out?

LENKHEIM [*meeting her eye with imposing firmness*] Solely for your own sake, Mrs Haldenstedt How could it possibly affect me? Banish this abandoned female from your mind, and trust to Time Time is the great healer Time will restore your happiness.

AGNES. Well, Time works wonders, they say But it will never comfort me until I know for certain that the happiness he had with me was the right sort of happiness, and the happiness he had with the other woman the wrong sort How do I know that she wasnt a cleverer woman than I am? I dont care that [*snapping her fingers*] how young she is, or how pretty she is Time will bring her to my level in those ways soon enough But I'm not clever at the things he was clever at I dont understand science nor care about it If I have to keep the house spick and span I cant always keep myself spick and span; and I know he was particular about such things Thats where she might have cut me out. She might easily have persuaded him that she was the right woman for him, and

that I was the wrong one

LENKHEIM No, no You were an excellent wife to him, Mrs Haldenstedt, and he knew it.

AGNES I dont say I wasnt But she hadnt to keep the house for him. She had nothing to do but please him And if she was clever into the bargain, what chance had I?

Edith comes in from the corridor

EDITH Good morning, Professor

LENKHEIM [*relieved by the interruption*] Good morning Will you excuse me, Mrs Haldenstedt. I have a few words to say to Fessler before Jitta comes

AGNES You have been so good I will think over your advice indeed I will

LENKHEIM [*encouragingly*] Do [*He waves his hand to Edith, and goes into the study, leaving the mother and daughter alone together*]

AGNES [*looking after him bitterly as she goes back to her place at the table*] It's easy for him to talk

EDITH [*wandering about restlessly between the table and the console*] Why do you listen to him? Why do you run to strangers when you want to talk about father? Why should our being mother and daughter keep us so far apart?

AGNES What a thing to say, child

EDITH [*going to her*] Of course if you dont want me, mother, I dont want to force myself on you.

AGNES [*dutifully, without real feeling*] Well, of course, darling, I want you

EDITH [*irritated*] No, not of course, not in the way you think Has it occurred to you that it is rather hard on me to be left entirely to myself when things are so serious with us?

AGNES I dont know what you have to complain of You used to trust me to know what was right for you, and now you have suddenly turned on me Surely, child, nobody can be a better judge of what is best for you than your own mother Here I am, worried to death almost, and you making it worse for me by setting yourself against me

EDITH I am not setting myself against you, mother. What I am setting myself against is being expected to go through life blindfold, or pretending to be blindfold I am to be a good little child, and not know anything nor feel anything that little children ought not to know and feel, just when I, as a woman, most want the companionship of another woman to whom I can pour out my

feelings and my sorrow on equal terms

AGNES I cant understand you, child, and I wont have you talking to me like that

EDITH I often wonder whether you have ever understood anybody Perhaps you did not understand father

AGNES You dare—

EDITH [*continuing impetuously*] Oh, I know very well how tidy you kept his house for him, just as I keep my room You did your duty nobody can blame you But was his house a home for him, as his heart made it a home for me?

AGNES You are simply silly, child Your grief and your crazy love for your father have turned your head I wonder what you would say if you really knew

EDITH [*scornfully*] If I really knew! Do you suppose any girl of my age nowadays does not know more than you were ever taught?

AGNES [*shrieking*] What?

EDITH I know, as well as you do, where my father died, and how he died

Mrs Haldenstedt covers her eyes in horror Fessler, opening the study door, appears on the threshold

AGNES Oh, how dreadful! This will kill me [*To Edith, rising*] Oh, now I know what you are Just as bad as your father! Just as bad as your father!

FESSLER What on earth is the matter?

AGNES Dont ask me Oh, this is beyond everything Let me go [*she rushes from the room*]

FESSLER What have you done?

EDITH [*coolly*] Told her I knew I had to

FESSLER [*closing the door, and coming softly to Edith*] My dear you have dragged the poor woman down from her little heaven

EDITH My father's wife might have had a heaven on earth, but that poor woman, as you call her, did not know even how to begin

FESSLER Your grief is carrying you too far Try not to be unjust to her

EDITH I am not unjust It is my father who needs justice

FESSLER It is not much use, is it, giving justice to the dead and withholding it from the living?

EDITH You need not lecture me I am on my guard.

FESSLER Against what?

EDITH Against sharing my father's fate

FESSLER [*terrified*] Dying!

EDITH No. Living in utter loneliness

FESSLER Oh, that! How you frightened me! But you know, dear, you mustnt worry too much about your father It's a sort of hypochondria, and it may make you really ill

EDITH [*scornfully*] Yes, I know What cant be cured must be endured, so let us get away from this unfortunate affair and fall back into the current of everyday life That is what you want me to do But I cannot do it He was everything to me I cannot describe what I feel it is as if I were a branch broken off from him, a limb torn out of him, as if I were bleeding to death of the wound that killed him As I see him now he is quite different from what he seemed to me when he was alive, and much greater I think of him imprisoned in these walls, longing for his proper happiness, and then finding too late the woman who was his real destiny

FESSLER Ah yes destiny! destiny! He had to fulfil his destiny, I suppose

EDITH He did not fulfil it Life fulfils destiny, not death

FESSLER [*prosaically*] Well, you know, death is a sort of destiny as well If you are right, and he really was lonely here owing to your mother being incompatible and all that, then I quite agree it was a mercy he hit on somebody who could understand him and comfort him Still, you must be careful not to idealize a person you dont know You see, everybody is an ideal person to us until we meet them, and then, undoubtedly, some of the guilt comes off the gingerbread I am so desperately afraid that if you find her out, she will prove a horrible disappointment to you

EDITH Never fear I know my father too well. [*Turning fiercely on him*] But that you can think so little of him as to believe what other people are whispering about him yes, and about her you! who have worked with him and had all his confidence! that digs a gulf between us

FESSLER. Oh dont say that You cant mean it, Edith I love you I have the truest respect for your father

EDITH Then how can you belittle him so?

FESSLER My dear, I am a man, and I know more about men's ways than you do A man is a very mixed sort of animal. Ask any experienced man, and he will tell you that there is a certain side to human nature that must just be ruled out in judging people's characters Even the best men are subject to aberrations, or at least commonnesses, in their

relations with women, just as they will eat rotten cheese, and half-putrid partridges that are really only fit for pigs

EDITH You are not making it any better by saying such disgusting things

FESSLER. Yes, but you want the truth, dont you? You know very well that Goethe was a great man, but the fine ladies of Weimar were shocked by his marriage Rousseau was a great man, but his Teresa married a groom after his death

EDITH. My father was a gentleman He was worlds above Rousseau in refinement, and even above Goethe

FESSLER Well, I could say something more, but I suppose I mustnt

EDITH What more can you say? Is it something more against my father?

FESSLER Not exactly against him, but still—

EDITH Well, still?

FESSLER He married your mother

EDITH [*staggered*] Oh! How mean of you to throw that in his face! Why do you not point out what is so clear to any unprejudiced mind, that a man who made a mistake like that once would be the last person in the world to make the same mistake again?

FESSLER [*with placid obstinacy*] Because I am sorry to say, my dear, that men's lives consist mostly of their making the same mistake over and over again I see a lot of that as a doctor. Look at your mother she knows that if she eats prawns and cucumbers she will have a wretched night, but she never can resist them I knew a man who was married three times, and every one of his wives drank

EDITH. The more you say, the more I see that we shall never understand one another, and that you will never feel about my father as I do I could not have believed you could be so coarse Nobody in this house understands me, neither my mother nor you nor anybody

FESSLER But if you want people to understand you, you must be reasonable I often used to have to say that to your father. You take after him, you know

EDITH If I do I must take care not to make the mistake in marrying that he made Doctor Fessler. I am sorry; but I cannot be your wife

FESSLER I dont mind that so much for the present if only you wont call me Doctor Fessler. It's ridiculous You dont expect me

to call you Miss Haldenstedt, do you?

EDITH Yes I do

FESSLER Then I wont. You see, I dont know how long this mood of yours will last

EDITH Life is short: dont waste any more of yours on me. I shall not go back from what I have said.

FESSLER Neither shall I I can wait

EDITH I cannot prevent your waiting Everybody seems to think they know my own mind better than I do myself I can only tell you one thing I have one object in life now, and one only

FESSLER. And what is that, if I may ask?

EDITH To find the woman who made my father happy, and to force you to confess that she is high heavens above your Goethe's Christiane, and your Rousseau's Teresa, and—you neednt remind me—above my own mother.

FESSLER Well, I hope you may, darling Does that please you?

Jitta comes in from the corridor Fessler pulls himself together into his best professional bedside manner Edith rushes to Jitta and embraces her

EDITH Oh, how good of you to come! How glad I am to see you!

JITTA Is your mother at home?

EDITH Yes do you want her? I will send her [*she runs out*]

JITTA [*coming to Fessler in the middle of the room*] What is the matter with the child?

FESSLER. She is still fearfully upset. She is having a hard fight of it here

JITTA [*looking at him with quick sympathy*] You are not looking very happy yourself, Doctor

FESSLER She has broken it off [*he narrowly misses a sob*].

JITTA Oh, that mustnt be Why, it was for your sake that I opened her eyes a little about her father.

FESSLER. I am afraid it had rather the opposite effect

JITTA I hope not Tell me does my husband know of this new turn?

FESSLER. Not yet Perhaps you had better tell him. I dont know that I can go on working here every day if Edith sticks to it.

JITTA. Dont give in too soon, Doctor.

FESSLER. I am pretending not to—to her. But I am really afraid she may be in earnest.

JITTA Is there nothing I can do?

FESSLER It's very good of you, Mrs Lenkheim. But I must see this thing through my-

self, thank you And now I must be off [*He goes past her towards the door*]

JITTA [*shaking his hand*] Goodbye, Doctor
Dont despise my help

FESSLER Oh no, Mrs Lenkheim, but—

Mrs Haldenstedt comes in

AGNES [*still distracted*] Oh, what is this that Edith tells me, Doctor?

FESSLER We wont discuss it now, Mrs Haldenstedt You had better talk it over with Mrs Lenkheim Goodbye Goodbye, Mrs Lenkheim [*He bows to them and goes out*]

AGNES Sit down, wont you? [*Jitta sits on the couch Agnes sits down weofully beside her*] He's gone, and Heaven knows whether he will ever come back This is a marked house everybody deserts it Who knows how soon I shall be left alone here to haunt the place like my own shadow? I shall sit alone, going over and over that dreadful time in my imagination, with no relief but just thinking how I can catch that wretch that stole from me my right to be beside my husband when he died

JITTA She did not intend that You may forgive her that, at least

AGNES Oh, you mustnt think it's mere spite and revenge It's that I really loved Bruno to the last as I loved him from the first He was all I had that I cared about I am not like a man, to begin all over again with a new love I shall never get away from it or get over it Day by day all those years we lived together, sat at the same table, took it in turns to rock the cradle or take the child in our hands to pet it, and then he goes off to another woman without a word or a thought for me [*Crying*] I didnt deserve it I didnt indeed

JITTA There, dear, there! Dont torture yourself After all, if he had died in your arms, you would still have had to grieve for him It might even have broken your heart

AGNES Oh, if only it had! I could think of him then without bitterness and shame

JITTA Try to forgive him for the sake of the old days when you were young together What does it matter what foolish things we old people do?

AGNES I cant forgive him Not while I am in the dark about her Listen to me, Mrs Lenkheim If I thought it was only her body that took him, I wouldnt care a straw I have had thoughts myself about our young men at the college sports only fancies of course, and I wouldnt have indulged them for the

world, but a man might What I cant bear is the thought that she might have been somebody like you

JITTA [*startled*] Like me!

AGNES Yes for he thought a great deal of you, and if you had been that sort of woman, I might have been jealous of you You are clever in his way, and you could understand him when he was talking right above my head You could talk about his work to him I couldnt

JITTA Oh no, Mrs Haldenstedt I knew better than that Nothing annoys a man more than a woman who talks to him about his business and pretends to understand it Do you know what Bruno always talked to me about? what it always came round to, no matter what subject he started with?

AGNES What?

JITTA You

AGNES Me!

JITTA Yes, you, you, you, you Do you know, I sometimes wanted to shake him for not taking a little more interest in me occasionally? His conscience was never easy about you You had done everything for him, and he had taken it all and gone on with his scientific work the work that did not pay, when he might have been making a fashionable practice for himself and leaving you comfortably off

AGNES [*beginning to cry*] But I never grudged it to him I wanted him to be great I wasnt really as good a wife as I might have been I worried him about things that he neednt have known anything about. It's in my nature I cant help it

JITTA It was not in his nature to blame you for that He understood He was frightfully faithful to you You possessed all his thoughts you dominated his destiny you haunted him What right had you to take a great man like that all to yourself? I wanted a little bit of Bruno, but you stood always in the way Marriage is a very wonderful thing It held him as nothing else could hold him

AGNES But the other woman?

JITTA Oh, the other woman! Need you make such a fuss about her? You dont even know whether she was not a patient who had to conceal the fact that she was consulting a doctor There are such people, you know But suppose she was what you think! Would a woman who had any serious relations with him have coolly walked off and left him to

die? A pet dog would not have done such a thing. They would have found it at his side.

AGNES [*exactly*] You think then that though he forgot what was due to himself, he didn't forget what was due to me? that when he went into that disgraceful place with another woman he was only making a convenience of her? that it was a mere chance that she was there to close his eyes, like a chambermaid in a hotel?

JITTA She did not close his eyes. She stole away from his side after coldbloodedly covering up her tracks. Could you have done that?

AGNES I never thought of that. Of course—of course. Yes, that shewed what she was, didn't it?

JITTA What does it matter what she was? She came out of the dark, and went back into the dark. Leave her there, as she left him.

AGNES [*shaking her head*] I can't imagine how women can bring themselves to behave so. What sort of women must they be? She must have known that he could never have cared for her.

JITTA You don't know how she got him there. But I know that if he really opened his heart to her, he talked to her about you.

AGNES [*smiling*] Well, I am sure, Mrs. Lenkheim, this talk has made the most wonderful difference to me. You don't know how much good you have done me. It only shews how little we can trust our own feelings and our own judgment when such troubles come to us. The weight you have taken off my mind! you can't imagine.

JITTA. Have I? Then I have done what I came to do. [*She rises*]

AGNES [*holding her*] Oh, don't go yet. You know, it's very funny how one's mind works.

JITTA [*sitting down again*] How?

AGNES [*slowly and almost roguishly*] I'm so grateful to you, that I'm afraid of offending you if I tell you. But I am sure you will only laugh.

JITTA [*with a melancholy smile*] We both need a good laugh, don't we?

AGNES Have you ever found that you have been all along thinking something that never came into your head for a single moment?

JITTA That sounds a little difficult. I am afraid I don't quite follow.

AGNES Of course you don't. It's too silly. But do you know that the moment you took that weight off my mind, and gave me back my peace and happiness—

JITTA [*murmurs*] I am so glad that I did.

AGNES [*nodding gratefully, and continuing*] Well, that very moment I knew that I had been believing all along—but I don't think I ought to say it, only it's so funny.

JITTA What?

AGNES Why, that you were the woman [*She begins to chuckle*]

JITTA. No!!!

AGNES. Yes I did.

JITTA But really?

AGNES Really and truly.

JITTA [*beginning to laugh hysterically*] How funny!

AGNES [*her chuckles now culminating in hearty laughter*] Isn't it? You're not angry, are you? Oh dear—[*laughing more than ever*]

JITTA Oh no, of course not.

Jitta has a paroxysm of agonizing laughter, and Agnes accompanies her without a suspicion that she is not enjoying the joke in good faith. Jitta at last recovers her self-control with a desperate effort.

JITTA Don't make me laugh any more. I am afraid I shall go into hysterics. I am still very far from well.

AGNES It's such a shame to laugh at all at such a time. But for the life of me I couldn't help it.

JITTA [*looking hard at her*] You know, Mrs. Haldenstedt, I was very very fond of him.

AGNES. I am sure you were, darling, and I shouldn't have minded a bit if it had been you: in fact I'm half disappointed that it wasn't, you have been such an angel to me. Isn't it funny, the things that come into our heads? But it's wicked of me to make you talk and laugh so much, and you so ill. You're very pale, dear. Can I get you anything?

JITTA If I might just lie down here for awhile I—

AGNES [*rising to make room for Jitta to recline*] Yes, yes, of course you shall, dear. Make yourself comfortable.

JITTA. I don't want to go without seeing Edith.

AGNES [*taken aback*] Oh!

JITTA What is it?

AGNES I forgot all about Edith. Who is to tell her? She sees her father like a saint in a

self, thank you And now I must be off [*He goes past her towards the door*]

JITTA [*shaking his hand*] Goodbye, Doctor Dont despise my help

FESSLER Oh no, Mrs Lenkheim, but—

Mrs Haldenstedt comes in

AGNES [*still distracted*] Oh, what is this that Edith tells me, Doctor?

FESSLER We wont discuss it now, Mrs Haldenstedt You had better talk it over with Mrs Lenkheim Goodbye Goodbye, Mrs Lenkheim [*He bows to them and goes out*]

AGNES Sit down, wont you? [*Jitta sits on the couch Agnes sits down weofully beside her*] He's gone, and Heaven knows whether he will ever come back. This is a marked house everybody deserts it Who knows how soon I shall be left alone here to haunt the place like my own shadow? I shall sit alone, going over and over that dreadful time in my imagination, with no relief but just thinking how I can catch that wretch that stole from me my right to be beside my husband when he died

JITTA She did not intend that You may forgive her that, at least

AGNES Oh, you mustnt think it's mere spite and revenge It's that I really loved Bruno to the last as I loved him from the first He was all I had that I cared about I am not like a man, to begin all over again with a new love I shall never get away from it or get over it. Day by day all those years we lived together, sat at the same table, took it in turns to rock the cradle or take the child in our hands to pet it, and then he goes off to another woman without a word or a thought for me [*Crying*] I didnt deserve it I didnt indeed

JITTA. There, dear, there! Dont torture yourself After all, if he had died in your arms, you would still have had to grieve for him It might even have broken your heart

AGNES Oh, if only it had! I could think of him then without bitterness and shame

JITTA Try to forgive him for the sake of the old days when you were young together What does it matter what foolish things we old people do?

AGNES I cant forgive him Not while I am in the dark about her Listen to me, Mrs Lenkheim If I thought it was only her body that took him, I wouldnt care a straw I have had thoughts myself about our young men at the college sports only fancies of course, and I wouldnt have indulged them for the

world, but a man might What I cant bear is the thought that she might have been somebody like you

JITTA [*startled*] Like me!

AGNES Yes for he thought a great deal of you, and if you had been that sort of woman, I might have been jealous of you You are clever in his way, and you could understand him when he was talking right above my head You could talk about his work to him I couldnt

JITTA Oh no, Mrs Haldenstedt I knew better than that Nothing annoys a man more than a woman who talks to him about his business and pretends to understand it Do you know what Bruno always talked to me about? what it always came round to, no matter what subject he started with?

AGNES What?

JITTA You

AGNES Me!

JITTA Yes, you, you, you, you Do you know, I sometimes wanted to shake him for not taking a little more interest in me occasionally? His conscience was never easy about you You had done everything for him, and he had taken it all and gone on with his scientific work the work that did not pay, when he might have been making a fashionable practice for himself and leaving you comfortably off

AGNES [*beginning to cry*] But I never grudged it to him I wanted him to be great I want really as good a wife as I might have been I worried him about things that he neednt have known anything about. It's in my nature I cant help it

JITTA It was not in his nature to blame you for that He understood He was faithfully faithful to you You possessed all his thoughts you dominated his destiny you haunted him What right had you to take a great man like that all to yourself? I wanted a little bit of Bruno, but you stood always in the way Marriage is a very wonderful thing It held him as nothing else could hold him

AGNES But the other woman?

JITTA Oh, the other woman! Need you make such a fuss about her? You dont even know whether she was not a patient who had to conceal the fact that she was consulting a doctor There are such people, you know But suppose she was what you think! Would a woman who had any serious relations with him have coolly walked off and left him to

die? A pet dog would not have done such a thing. They would have found it at his side.

AGNES [*excitedly*] You think then that though he forgot what was due to himself, he didn't forget what was due to me? that when he went into that disgraceful place with another woman he was only making a convenience of her? that it was a mere chance that she was there to close his eyes, like a chambermaid in a hotel?

JITTA She did not close his eyes. She stole away from his side after coldbloodedly covering up her tracks. Could you have done that?

AGNES I never thought of that. Of course—of course. Yes, that shewed what she was, didn't it?

JITTA What does it matter what she was? She came out of the dark, and went back into the dark. Leave her there, as she left him.

AGNES [*shaking her head*] I can't imagine how women can bring themselves to behave so. What sort of women must they be? She must have known that he could never have cared for her.

JITTA You don't know how she got him there. But I know that if he really opened his heart to her, he talked to her about you.

AGNES [*smiling*] Well, I am sure, Mrs Lenkheim, this talk has made the most wonderful difference to me. You don't know how much good you have done me. It only shews how little we can trust our own feelings and our own judgment when such troubles come to us. The weight you have taken off my mind! you can't imagine.

JITTA. Have I? Then I have done what I came to do. [*She rises*]

AGNES [*holding her*] Oh, don't go yet. You know, it's very funny how one's mind works.

JITTA [*sitting down again*] How?

AGNES [*slowly and almost roguishly*] I'm so grateful to you, that I'm afraid of offending you if I tell you. But I am sure you will only laugh.

JITTA [*with a melancholy smile*] We both need a good laugh, don't we?

AGNES Have you ever found that you have been all along thinking something that never came into your head for a single moment?

JITTA That sounds a little difficult. I am afraid I don't quite follow.

AGNES Of course you don't. It's too silly. But do you know that the moment you took that weight off my mind, and gave me back my peace and happiness—

JITTA [*murmurs*] I am so glad that I did.

AGNES [*nodding gratefully, and continuing*] Well, that very moment I knew that I had been believing all along—but I don't think I ought to say it, only it's so funny.

JITTA What?

AGNES Why, that you were the woman [*She begins to chuckle*]

JITTA No!!!

AGNES Yes I did.

JITTA But really?

AGNES Really and truly.

JITTA [*beginning to laugh hysterically*] How funny!

AGNES [*her chuckles now culminating in hearty laughter*] Isn't it? You're not angry, are you? Oh dear—[*laughing more than ever*].

JITTA Oh no, of course not.

Jitta has a paroxysm of agonizing laughter, and Agnes accompanies her without a suspicion that she is not enjoying the joke in good faith. Jitta at last recovers her self-control with a desperate effort.

JITTA Don't make me laugh any more. I am afraid I shall go into hysterics. I am still very far from well.

AGNES It's such a shame to laugh at all at such a time. But for the life of me I couldn't help it.

JITTA [*looking hard at her*] You know, Mrs Haldenstedt, I was very very fond of him.

AGNES I am sure you were, darling, and I shouldn't have minded a bit if it had been you. In fact I'm half disappointed that it wasn't, you have been such an angel to me. Isn't it funny, the things that come into our heads? But it's wicked of me to make you talk and laugh so much, and you so ill. You're very pale, dear. Can I get you anything?

JITTA If I might just lie down here for awhile I—

AGNES [*rising to make room for Jitta to recline*] Yes, yes, of course you shall, dear. Make yourself comfortable.

JITTA I don't want to go without seeing Edith.

AGNES [*taken aback*] Oh!

JITTA What is it?

AGNES. I forgot all about Edith. Who is to tell her? She sees her father like a saint in a

picture, and I could never put it to her in the wonderful way you put it to me. If only you would be so good as to tell her for me. Would you mind?

JITTA Not in the least. Edith is like a child of my own to me. It would be the greatest happiness to me if I could set her mind at rest as you are good enough to think I have set yours.

AGNES You have indeed and indeed you have. I am sure what we owe you, with your dear husband coming here every day to set the papers in order, and you being more than an angel to me in spite of your illness, words can never say. Just be quiet where you are, and I will send Edith to you. Oh, you have made me happy, dear! [*She goes out into the corridor*]

Jitta, left alone, begins to laugh again hysterically, and is dissolving into convulsive sobs when she makes a great effort, springs up from the sofa, dashes the tears from her eyes with a proud gesture, goes to the glass, and has just made herself presentable when Edith appears. Her eyes are wide open and her expression one of joyful surprise and relief. She runs eagerly to Jitta.

EDITH What on earth have you done to mother? She is laughing. She is positively singing. Either you are a witch, or she has gone mad.

JITTA Are you angry with her for daring to sing in this house of mourning? Or angry with me for making her sing?

EDITH Oh no. It's rather a relief. But it's very odd. How did you do it?

JITTA She made me laugh before I made her sing. You mustn't be shocked, dear. There is always a sort of reaction. Nature must have a relief from any feeling, no matter how deep and sincere it is. Have you ever seen a soldier's funeral?

EDITH No. Why?

JITTA They play the Dead March as they go to the grave, but they play the merriest tunes they know on their way back.

EDITH How unfeeling!

JITTA Yes, but how natural! Your mother would have gone mad if she had gone on as she was for another week. I am not sure that I should not have gone mad myself if she had not made me laugh [*Taking Edith by the shoulders and looking straight at her*]. And now what I want to know is how I am to make you laugh. For you will go mad if

you do not get back into everyday life again.

EDITH [*backing to the table, and half sitting against its edge*] Yes. I know. This house has been a sort of madhouse since my father died. We haven't spoken naturally, nor walked naturally, nor breathed naturally, nor thought naturally, because we were all so determined to feel naturally. Somehow, my mother's laughing and singing has made nonsense of it all suddenly.

JITTA Then you are happy again? If so, I may as well go home.

EDITH Happy! Oh no. But I am done with hypocrisy and conventionality, and that is such a relief that I seem happy by contrast. I suppose it is a sort of happiness to be able to give myself up at last wholly to my sorrow.

JITTA [*sitting down in Lenkheim's chair*] Which sorrow? The old sorrow that God made for you, or the new one that you have made for yourself?

EDITH [*straightening up*] I don't know what you mean.

JITTA Doctor Fessler says you have jilted him.

EDITH Did he call it jilting him?

JITTA No. I call it that.

EDITH But you can't think that. Do you know what he said?

JITTA No. Anything very dreadful?

EDITH He believes that my father died in the arms of a common woman of the streets.

JITTA And he thinks your father must have been as worthless as the woman he died with. I see.

EDITH Not at all. That is what is so dreadful. He thinks it makes no difference. He adores my father as much as he ever did, but he thinks you have to leave all that out when you are judging men. He thinks a woman doesn't matter. I can't forgive him for that. I couldn't marry a man unless he felt exactly as I do about my father.

JITTA Is that reasonable, dear? How could poor Doctor Fessler feel as you feel? You! your father's daughter!

EDITH Oh, of course I know that. I don't expect him to feel the same affection. But if he thought my father could go with low women—if he did not know for certain, as I know, that the woman my father loved must have been one of the best and noblest of

doesn't matter tuppence whom I marry [*Lenkheim opens the study door and is coming in when Edith, not hearing him, goes on*] I'd marry anyone to please you I'd even marry Alfred

LENKHEIM Thank you [*The two women spring up in dismay*] That's very kind of you, Edith, and very kind of Jitta to include me in the number of husbands she has apparently been offering you. But I have no intention of divorcing her at present

EDITH [*not knowing what else to say*] It wasn't that Mrs Lenkheim never offered you to me

JITTA Go off to the telephone, dear, and make it up with your man I will make it up for you with Alfred

LENKHEIM Do, Edith [*He crosses the room to the other door, and opens it for her with sardonic politeness*]

EDITH [*to Lenkheim, after kissing Jitta rather defiantly*] Mrs Lenkheim did not say a single unkind word about you. I did [*She nods mockingly in his face and goes out*].

LENKHEIM Have you told her?

JITTA [*her bored manner with her husband contrasting strongly with her warm interest in Edith*] She guessed She knew It is no use keeping secrets when they will not keep themselves I have made her happy that is all I care about [*She goes listlessly to the window-seat, and sits there looking out, with her shoulder turned to him*]

LENKHEIM And have you told the old woman? Have you made her happy?

JITTA I have made her happy But I did not tell her The strange thing is that she guesses it too, but she will never know it She doesn't want to know it. Edith did That makes all the difference I have made them both happy I wish someone could make me happy

LENKHEIM As I unfortunately am only your husband, I suppose there is no use my trying

JITTA [*turning her face to him with open contempt*] You!

LENKHEIM Funny, isn't it?

JITTA [*rising*] Don't be insufferable You owe it to your position as an injured husband never to speak to me when we are alone and there are no appearances to be kept up You swore not to And you have been talking to me ever since, except when there was somebody else present to talk to

LENKHEIM Make no mistake, Jitta when I swore that, I meant it

JITTA [*ironically*] So it appears

LENKHEIM When you swore to be faithful to me, you meant it, didn't you?

JITTA [*interrupting him curtly*] You need not remind me of that again I have not denied it I have not excused myself But I do not intend to have it thrown in my teeth every time we meet [*She turns away from him determinedly, and sits down in the chair between the table and the door*]

LENKHEIM Very well, then, don't you start reminding me every time we meet that I swore to do a good many things that I find I can't do Is that a bargain?

JITTA [*a little ashamed, feeling that she has allowed herself to descend to his level*] Yes. I beg your pardon I should not have said it But please remember that you can hurt me more than I can hurt you, because you have done nothing wrong You are within your rights you are above reproach, you have the superior position morally no taunts of mine can degrade you as your reproaches can degrade me [*Tragically*] I am a miserable creature I betrayed you to please myself I deserted him in his extremity to save myself Please leave me to my disgrace Nothing that you can say or think can add to the contempt I feel for myself

LENKHEIM [*chuckling a little*] How you enjoy being miserable, Jitta!

JITTA Enjoy!!

LENKHEIM You just revel in it. You think yourself such a jolly romantic figure You think that everything that happens to you is extraordinarily interesting because it happens to you And you think that everything that happens to me is quite uninteresting because it hasn't happened to you But what has happened to you has happened to lots of women—except, of course, the way it ended. And even that was an accident that might have happened to anyone

JITTA No doubt Unfortunately, I did not behave as any decent woman would

LENKHEIM That is just where you are mistaken, darling When you were brought to the point and put to the proof, you didn't behave romantically you behaved very sensibly You kept your head, and did just the right thing You saved your reputation and my reputation You prevented a horrible scandal. You have managed to make his wife

and daughter happy And yet you think you are ashamed of yourself because you were not found stretched on his dead body, with the limelight streaming on your white face, and the band playing slow music

JITTA. Oh, what a nature you have, Alfred! You are prosaic to the core.

LENKHEIM [*grinning*] If you had only been clever enough to take me in, your success would have been complete. It wouldnt have been difficult. I always took you in when I had an adventure

JITTA [*rising, very unpleasantly surprised, and not a little furious*] You! You have had adventures since we were married? You have deceived me?

LENKHEIM. Now dont begin imagining that I am a Don Juan To be precise, I have kissed other women twice I was drunk both times And I had a serious affair with your dear friend Thelma Petersen. That lasted until she and her husband went back to Norway

JITTA. Oh, how disgraceful! And you call her my friend!

LENKHEIM I call Bruno Haldenstedt my friend. So you see I am not your moral superior. I thought it might restore your happiness a little to know that

JITTA. Alfred: I will never speak to you nor cross the threshold of your house again.

LENKHEIM [*more amused than ever*] Except when you call to tell me so. When you let out about Haldenstedt I felt just as you feel now. Tomorrow you will think better of it, as I have thought better of it.

JITTA [*more dignified than ever*] If you imagine that any relations that could exist between Mrs Petersen and yourself were in the least like my relations with Bruno, you only shew for the thousandth time how incapable you are of understanding either him or me.

LENKHEIM. I'm afraid you dont understand either Thelma or me as sympathetically as I could wish. Thelma was a very superior woman, let me tell you. If my taste did not lie in the direction of superior women I shouldnt have married you.

JITTA. I will not have it, Alfred. I will not be dragged down to your level.

LENKHEIM. Five minutes ago you were amusing yourself by pretending that you were beneath contempt.

JITTA So I am, on my own plane, and on his But not on yours.

LENKHEIM. I dont believe theres a woman alive who doesnt look on herself as a special creation, and consider her husband an inferior and common sort of animal.

JITTA. You forget that I did not think of Bruno in that way.

LENKHEIM Yes, but then he wasnt your husband. Thelma thought me a much finer fellow than Petersen

JITTA [*exasperated*] If you mention that woman to me again, I will break my promise to you, and walk straight out of your house before all the world.

LENKHEIM That will only make us quits, because, as it happens, I am going to break my promise to you

JITTA How?

LENKHEIM About the book I have read it.

JITTA Well?

LENKHEIM Well, I'll be hanged if I put my name to it In the first place nobody would believe I had ever written it In the second, it's the most utter tommy-rot that was ever put forward as a serious contribution to psychology. Why, it flatly contradicts everything I have been teaching for years past, and everything I was taught myself

JITTA [*intensely angry*] Does that prove it to be tommy-rot, or does it prove that you are an idiot?

LENKHEIM. I may be an idiot, but my idiocy is the accepted idiocy taught in the University at which I am a professor, and his idiocy is not taught anywhere. Do you forget that I have to earn bread for the household, and that your own money hardly pays for your dresses? This book would ruin us both

JITTA. It is a sacred trust; and I swore to him that it should be fulfilled.

LENKHEIM I didnt. And the old woman has just told me that he said the book was to be her insurance policy No doubt I am Bruno's inferior; but I draw the line at helping him to rob his widow for my own profit.

JITTA. Then you refuse to carry out his intentions?

LENKHEIM I cant carry out his intentions

JITTA. You mean you wont.

LENKHEIM. I mean what I say When he left me this book of his, he did so on the understanding that I was to know nothing of his relations with you He hadnt quite such a low opinion of me as to suppose that I

would take it as the price of my wife Well, whose fault is it that I know all about it? Who let the secret out? You did

JITTA [*collapsing into his chair*] Oh how shamefully I have betrayed him at every step! How despicable I am!

LENKHEIM [*sympathetically*] Not a bit of it, dear You have just said yourself that if secrets dont keep themselves, nobody can keep them Thus secret wouldnt keep itself Come! stop crying If only you would be content to be a woman for a moment, and not a heroine! And oh Lord! if you only had the smallest sense of humor!

JITTA [*passionately*] You cant even try to console me without sneering at me Do you know what Edith called you?

LENKHEIM No You can tell me if it will relieve your feelings

JITTA She said you were a chump, and so you are

LENKHEIM All husbands are chumps, dear, after the first month or so Jolly good thing for their wives too, sometimes

JITTA What are you going to do with that book?

LENKHEIM If I had any regard for his reputation I should burn it at our domestic hearth

JITTA [*recovering her dignity, rising, and speaking with tranquil conviction*] You shall not do that, Alfred

LENKHEIM Perhaps not, but it would serve you right if I did

JITTA It would not serve Edith right Besides, his work, his reputation, his greatness—for whatever you may say I know that that book is the greatest that ever was written—belong not only to humanity, but to her And I love her as if she were my own daughter I have no other child

LENKHEIM [*wincing a little*] My fault, I suppose Oh, you can be nasty when you want to, Jitta

JITTA Oh, no, no Will you never understand?

LENKHEIM Probably not, being only a chump Be a little amiable, Jitta I havnt been so very hard on you, have I?

JITTA [*insisting*] You will not destroy the book? You will edit it? You will do everything for it that you could for a book of your own?

LENKHEIM Well, if—

Fessler and Edith come in arm-in-arm, followed by Mrs Haldenstedt

EDITH Here he is Kiss him

FESSLER [*hastily*] Tchut! [*Taking Jitta's hand and kissing it*] I owe you my life's happiness, Mrs Lenkheim

AGNES I am sure we all owe you the happiness of our lives You are our good angel indeed you are Oh, you are a lucky man, Mr Lenkheim, to have such a wife

JITTA [*striking in before he can reply*] I have one more piece of news for you, Mrs Haldenstedt. Alfred has found your husband's book It is a masterpiece He will edit it He will do everything he could do for it if it were his own book

FESSLER [*triumphant*] Splendid!

AGNES [*overjoyed*] Oh, think of that! Edith [*she kisses Edith*]! Doctor [*she kisses the doctor*]! Professor [*she kisses Lenkheim*]! Didnt I say she was our good angel?

LENKHEIM And now, may I take my good angel home?

AGNES [*to Jitta*] Oh, must you go, dear

JITTA [*sweetly, to Agnes*] Yes, dear [*Threateningly to Alfred*] Come home [*She goes to the door*]

LENKHEIM [*cheerily, as he shakes hands with everybody*] Goodbye

ALL [*shaking hands*] Goodbye. Goodbye Goodbye

JITTA [*sternly*] Alfred come home

LENKHEIM [*hastily obeying*] Yes, dear

AGNES [*as the door closes sharply behind them*] She's too good for him

THE END

XXXIV

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE; OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

BEING THE NOVEL OF CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION DONE INTO
A STAGE PLAY IN THREE ACTS AND IN BLANK VERSE

ACT I

A glade in Wiltstoken Park

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA. Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,
And from the well of Nature in our hearts
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice
That bears the weight of all the stamping world,
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,
Albert most rich, most learned, and most wise,
Am yet most lonely What are riches worth
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse bearer
That life remains unpurchasable? Learning
Learns but one lesson doubt! To excel all
Is, to be lonely Oh, ye busy birds,
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees
With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,
Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,
Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads
High heavens above us crawlers.
[*A rook sets up a great cawing, and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves*
Lo, the leaves
That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me—
poor maid!—
Deride with joyous comfortable chatter
These stolen feathers Laugh at me, the clothed one
Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books
Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad
Give me a mate that never heard of these,
A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;
Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.
[*Another gust of wind and bird-chatter She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands Cashel Byron, in a*

white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees

CASHEL Whats this? Whom have we here?
A woman!

LYDIA [*looking up*] Yes

CASHEL. You have no business here I have
Away!

Women distract me Hence!

LYDIA Bid you me hence?

I am upon mine own ground Who are you?
I take you for a god, a sylvan god

This place is mine I share it with the birds,
The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company

Of haunted solitudes

CASHEL A sylvan god!

A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?
Walk? heave the chest with breath? or like a feather

Lift you—like this? [*He sets her on her feet.*

LYDIA [*panting*] You take away my breath!
Youre strong Your hands off, please Thank you. Farewell

CASHEL. Before you go. when shall we meet again?

LYDIA Why should we meet again?

CASHEL Who knows? We shall
That much I know by instinct Whats your name?

LYDIA Lydia Carew

CASHEL Lydia's a pretty name
Where do you live?

LYDIA I' the castle

CASHEL [*thunderstruck*] Do not say
You are the lady of this great domain

LYDIA I am

CASHEL Accursed luck! I took you for
The daughter of some farmer. Well, your pardon

I came too close I looked too deep Farewell.

LYDIA I pardon that. Now tell me who you are.

CASHEL Ask me not whence I come, nor what I am.

You are the lady of the castle I

would take it as the price of my wife Well, whose fault is it that I know all about it? Who let the secret out? You did

JITTA [*collapsing into his chair*] Oh how shamefully I have betrayed him at every step! How despicable I am!

LENKHEIM [*sympathetically*] Not a bit of it, dear You have just said yourself that if secrets dont keep themselves, nobody can keep them This secret wouldnt keep itself Come! stop crying If only you would be content to be a woman for a moment, and not a heroine! And oh Lord! if you only had the smallest sense of humor!

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LENKHEIM And now, may I take my good angel home?

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JITTA [*sweetly, to Agnes*] Yes, dear [*Threateningly to Alfred*] Come home [*She goes to the door*]

LENKHEIM [*cheerily, as he shakes hands with everybody*] Goodbye

ALL [*shaking hands*] Goodbye. Goodbye Goodbye

JITTA [*sternly*] Alfred come home

LENKHEIM [*hastily obeying*] Yes, dear

AGNES [*as the door closes sharply behind them*] She's too good for him

MELLISH

Ah

Byron, let it remind thee Once I heard
An old song it ran thus [*He clears his throat*]
Ahem, Ahem!

[*Sings*]—They say there is no other

Can take the place of mother—

I am out o' voice: forgive me, but remember
Thy mother—were that sainted woman
here—

Would say, Obey thy trainer

CASHEL

Now, by Heaven,

Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out?
They thunder like an avalanche. Old man
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now?
Presume not on thine age and on thy nasti-
ness

Vanish, and promptly

MELLISH

Can I leave thee here

Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews?
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge

CASHEL Within this breast a fire is newly
lit

Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose
radiance

Shall make the orb of night hang in the
heavens

Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon

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Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly

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CASHEL 'Tis thou art mad to trifle in my
path

Thwart me no more Begone

MELLISH

My boy, my son,

I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness
Thwart thee, my son! Ah no I'll go with
thee.

I'll brave the dews I'll sacrifice my sleep
I am old—no matter ne'er shall it be said
Mellish deserted thee

CASHEL

You resolute gods

That will not spare this man, upon your
knees

Take the disparity twixt his age and mine
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat
I step at your behest. Bear you me witness
This is not Victory, but Execution.

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*force against the waistcoat of Mellish, who
doubles up like a folded towel, and lies
without sense or motion*

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distance.*

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That he should try experiments on me

As Simpson did on his with chloroform?

Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo

He hath unmanned me. all my nerve is gone.

This very morning my official chief,

Have but this hard and blackened hand to
live by

LYDIA I have felt its strength and envied
you Your name?

I have told you mine

CASHEL My name is Cashel Byron

LYDIA I never heard the name, and yet
you utter it

As men announce a celebrated name

Forgive my ignorance

CASHEL I bless it, Lydia

I have forgot your other name

LYDIA Carew

Cashel's a pretty name too

MELLISH [*calling through the wood*] Coo-ee!
Byron!

CASHEL A thousand curses! Oh, I beg you,
go

This is a man you must not meet

MELLISH [*further off*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA He's losing us What does he in my
woods?

CASHEL He is a part of what I am What
that is

You must not know It would end all between
us

And yet there's no dishonor in't your lawyer,
Who let your lodge to me, will vouch me
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I am ashamed to tell you what I am—

At least, as yet Some day, perhaps

MELLISH [*nearer*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA His voice is nearer Fare you well,
my tenant

When next your rent falls due, come to the
castle

Pay me in person Sir your most obedient
[*She curtsies and goes*]

CASHEL. Lives in this castle! Owns this park!
A lady

Marry a prizefighter! Impossible

And yet the prizefighter must marry her

Enter MELLISH

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish
dam,

Is this thy park, that thou, with voice ob-
scene,

Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my
name

For all the world to know that Cashel Byron
Is training here for combat

MELLISH Swine you me?

I've caught you, have I? You have found a
woman

Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on

her

I will I say it And my name's Bob Mellish
CASHEL Change thy initial and be truly
hight

Hellish As for thy dog, why dost thou keep
one

And bark thyself? Begone

MELLISH

I'll not begone

You shall come back with me and do your
duty—

Your duty to your backers, do you hear?

You have not punched the bag this blessed
day

CASHEL. The putrid bag engirdled by thy
belt

Invites my fist

MELLISH [*neeping*] Ingrate! O wretched lot!
Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish,
Trainer of heroes, bulder-up of brawn,
Vicarious victor, thou createst champions
That quickly turn thy tyrants But beware
Without me thou art nothing Disobey me,
And all thy boasted strength shall fall from
thee

With flaccid muscles and with failing breath
Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe,
I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day
Thou didst forswear thy training

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Noisome quack

That canst not from thine own abhorrent
visage

Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st
Even with thy presence my untainted blood
Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself
Rotten with surfeting Leave me in peace
This grove is sacred thou profanest it
Hence! I have business that concerns thee
not

MELLISH Ay, with your woman You will
lose your fight.

Have you forgot your duty to your backers?
Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is!

What makes a man but duty? Where were
we

Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words
England expects that every man—

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Shall twaddle

About his duty Mellish at no hour

Can I regard thee wholly without loathing,
But when thou playst the moralist, by
Heaven,

My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee,
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall
On Mars's armor—but enough of that
It does remind me of my mother

MELLISH Ah
Byron, let it remind thee Once I heard
An old song. it ran thus [*He clears his throat*]
Ahem, Ahem!

[*Sings*].—They say there is no other
Can take the place of mother—
I am out o' voice: forgive me; but remember
Thy mother—were that sainted woman
here—

Would say, Obey thy trainer

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Upon my person? Was I his assistant
That he should try experiments on me
As Simpson did on his with chloroform?
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo
He hath unmanned me: all my nerve is gone.
This very morning my official chief,

Tapping with friendly forefinger this button,
Levelled me like a thunderstricken elm
Flat upon the Colonial Office floor

LYDIA Fancies, coz

LUCIAN Fancies! Fits! the chief said fits!
Delirium tremens! the chlorotic dance
Of Vitus! What could anyone have thought?
Your ruffian friend hath ruined me By
Heaven,

I tremble at a thumbnail Give me drink.

LYDIA What ho, without there! Bashville

BASHVILLE [*without*] Coming, madam
Enter BASHVILLE

LYDIA My cousins ails, Bashville Procure
some wet

[*Exit BASHVILLE*]

LUCIAN Some wet!!! Where learnt you
that atrocious word?

This is the language of a flower-girl

LYDIA. True It is horrible Said I "Some
wet"?

I meant, some drink Why did I say "Some
wet"?

Am I ensorcelled too? "Some wet"! Fie!
fie!

I feel as though some hateful thing had
stained me

Oh, Lucian, how could I have said "Some
wet"?

LUCIAN The horrid conversation of this
man

Hath numbed thy once unflinching sense of
fitness

LYDIA. Nay, he speaks very well he's
literate

Shakespeare he quotes unconsciously

LUCIAN And yet

Anon he talks pure pothouse

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE Sir your potion

LUCIAN Thanks [*He drinks*] I am better

A NEWSBOY [*calling without*] Extra special
Star!

Result of the great fight! Name of the winner!

LYDIA Who calls so loud?

BASHVILLE The papers, madam,

LYDIA Why?

Hath ought momentous happened?

BASHVILLE Madam yes

[*He produces a newspaper*]

All England for these thrilling paragraphs
A week has waited breathless

LYDIA Read them us

BASHVILLE [*reading*] "At noon today, un-
known to the police

Within a thousand miles of Wormwood
Scrubbs,

Th' Australian Champion and his challenger,
The Flying Dutchman, formerly engaged
I' the mercantile marine, fought to a finish
Lord Worthington, the well-known sporting
peer,

Was early on the scene "

LYDIA Lord Worthington!

BASHVILLE "The bold Ned Skene revisited
the ropes

To hold the bottle for his quondam novice,
Whilst in the seaman's corner were assembled
Professor Palmer and the Chelsea Snob
Mellish, whose epigastrium has been hurt,
Tis said, by accident at Wiltstocken,
Looked none the worse in the Australian's
corner

The flying Dutchman wore the Union Jack
His colors freely sold amid the crowd,
But Cashel's well-known spot of white on
blue—"

LYDIA Whose, did you say?

BASHVILLE Cashel's, my lady

LYDIA Lucian

Your hand—a chair—

BASHVILLE Madam you're ill

LYDIA. Proceed

What you have read I do not understand,
Yet I will hear it through Proceed

LUCIAN Proceed

BASHVILLE "But Cashel's well-known spot
of white on blue

Was fairly rushed for Time was called at
twelve,

When, with a smile of confidence upon
His ocean-beaten mug—"

LYDIA His mug?

LUCIAN [*explaining*] His face

BASHVILLE [*continuing*] "The Dutchman
came undaunted to the scratch,

But found the champion there already Both
Most heartily shook hands, amid the cheers
Of their encouraged backers Two to one
Was offered on the Melbourne nonpareil,
And soon, so fit the Flying Dutchman seemed,
Found takers everywhere No time was lost
In getting to the business of the day
The Dutchman led at once, and seemed to
land

On Byron's dicebox, but the seaman's reach,
Too short for execution at long shots,
Did not get fairly home upon the ivory,
And Byron had the best of the exchange "

LYDIA I do not understand What were

they doing?

LUCIAN Fighting with naked fists

LYDIA Oh, horrible!

I'll hear no more Or stay how did it end?
Was Cashel hurt?

LUCIAN [*to Bashville*] Skip to the final round

BASHVILLE "Round Three: the rumors that
had gone about

Of a breakdown in Byron's recent training
Seemed quite confirmed. Upon the call of
time

He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful,
Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to
Mend

At this point six to one was freely offered
Upon the Dutchman, and Lord Worthington
Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose
A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed
certain,

Take down the number of the Panley boy
The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is,
Seemed this time likely to go hungry Cashel
Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor,
Who, not to be denied, followed him up,
Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers "

LYDIA Oh stop—no more—or tell the worst
at once

I'll be revenged Bashville call the police
This brutal sailor shall be made to know
There's law in England

LUCIAN. Do not interrupt him
Mine ears are thirsting Finish, man What
next?

BASHVILLE "Forty to one, the Dutchman's
friends exclaimed

Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed
himself

A sportsman every inch Barely the bet
Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's
jaw

The sailor, bent on winning out of hand,
Sent in his right The issue seemed a cert,
When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left,
Cross-counter'd like a hundredweight of
brick—"

LUCIAN Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean?

BASHVILLE "The Dutchman went to grass,
a beaten man "

LYDIA Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well
done, Cashel!

BASHVILLE "A scene of indescribable
excitement

Ensued; for it was now quite evident
That Byron's grogginess had all along

Been feigned to make the market for his
backers

We trust this sample of colonial smartness
Will not find imitators on this side,
The losers settled up like gentlemen,
But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste
In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,
And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his
oxter,

Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd
The perfect pink of his condition"—[*a knock*]

LYDIA [*turning pale*] Bashville,
Didst hear? A knock

BASHVILLE Madam tis Byron's knock
Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN Reeking from the ring!
Oh, monstrous! Say you're out

LYDIA Send him away
I will not see the wretch How dare he
keep

Secrets from me? I'll punish him Pray say
I'm not at home [*Bashville turns to go*] Yet
stay I am afraid

He will not come again

LUCIAN A consummation
Devoutly to be wished by any lady

Pray, do you wish this man to come again?
LYDIA No, Lucian He hath used me very
ill

He should have told me I will ne'er forgive
him

Say, Not at home

BASHVILLE Yes, madam [*Exit*

LYDIA Stay—

LUCIAN [*stopping her*] No, Lydia

You shall not countermand that proper order
Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,
The thousands at your bank, and, above all,
Your unassailable social position

Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn.

LYDIA Nay, coz you're prejudiced

CASHEL [*without*] Liar and slave!

LYDIA What words were those?

LUCIAN The man is drunk with slaughter.
*Enter BASHVILLE running he shuts the door
and locks it*

BASHVILLE Save yourselves. at the staircase
foot the champion

Sprawls on the mat, by trick o' wrestler
tripped;

But when he rises, woe betide us all!

LYDIA Who bade you treat my visitor with
violence?

BASHVILLE He would not take my answer;
thrust the door

Back in my face, gave me the he i' th' throat,
Averred he felt your presence in his bones
I said he should feel mine there too, and
felled him,

Then fled to bar your door

LYDIA O lover's instinct!
He felt my presence Well, let him come in
We must not fail in courage with a fighter
Unlock the door

LUCIAN Stop Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity
To strike you were against his code of honor,
But me, above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession Also Bashville

BASHVILLE Think not of me, sir Let him
do his worst

Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference twixt his weight and
mine,

A second battle should he do this day
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my
mistress

Give me the word instant I'll take him on
Here—now—at catchweight Better bite the
carpet

A man, than fly, a coward

LUCIAN Bravely said
I will assist you with the poker

LYDIA No
I will not have him touched Open the door
BASHVILLE Destruction knocks thereat I
smile, and open

[Bashville opens the door Dead silence
Cashel enters, in tears A solemn pause

CASHEL You know my secret?

LYDIA Yes

CASHEL And thereupon
You bade your servant fling me from your
door

LYDIA I bade my servant say I was not
here

CASHEL [to Bashville] Why didst thou better
thy instruction, man?

Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee
this,"

Thoudst burst my heart I thank thee for
thy mercy

LYDIA Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him
"drunk with slaughter"?

Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?
CASHEL [to Lucian] The unwritten law that
shields the amateur

Against professional resentment, saves thee
O coward, to traduce behind their backs
Defenceless prizefighters!

LUCIAN Thou dost avow
Thou art a prizefighter.

CASHEL. It was my glory
I had hoped to offer to my lady there
My belts, my championships, my heaped-up
stakes,

My undefeated record but I knew
Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked

LYDIA Another secret?

LUCIAN Is there worse to come?

CASHEL. Know ye not then my mother is an
actress?

LUCIAN How horrible!

LYDIA Nay, nay how interesting!

CASHEL. A thousand victories cannot wipe
out

That birthstain Oh, my speech bewrayeth it
My earliest lesson was the player's speech
In Hamlet, and to this day I express myself
More like a mobled queen than like a man
Of flesh and blood. Well may your cousin
sneer!

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?

LUCIAN Injurious upstart if by Hecuba
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,
Know that she is to me, and I to her,
What never canst thou be I do defy thee,
And maugre all the odds thy skill doth give,
Outside I will await thee

LYDIA I forbid
Expressly any such duello Bashville
The door Put Mr Webber in a hansom,
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street
No answer tis my will

[Exeunt LUCIAN and BASHVILLE

And now, farewell

You must not come again, unless indeed
You can some day look in my eyes and say
Lydia my occupation's gone

CASHEL Ah no

It would remind you of my wretched mother
O God, let me be natural a moment!
What other occupation can I try?
What would you have me be?

LYDIA A gentleman

CASHEL A gentleman! Cashel Byron, stoop
To be the thing that bets on me! the fool
I flatter at so many coins a lesson!
The screaming creature who beside the ring
Gambles with basest wretches for my blood,
And pays with money that he never earned!
Let me die broken hearted rather!

LYDIA But

You need not be an idle gentleman
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen

CASHEL Thats the collection for the loser,
Lydia.

I am not wont to need it When your friends
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll
Rue their presumption, tis their wont to
claim

A moral victory In a sort they are
Nature's M P.s I am not yet so threadbare
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA You are offended with me

CASHEL. Yes I am
I can put up with much, but—"Nature's
gentleman"!

I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but
Must beg to be excused

LYDIA But surely, surely,
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners
With naked knuckles, is no work for you

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive
Fates

That weave my thread of life in ruder
patterns

Than these that he, antimacassarly,
Asprent thy drawing room As well demand
Why I at birth chose to begin my life
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance?
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave?
Only one thing more foolish could have been,
And that was to be born, not man, but
woman

This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine?

LYDIA These are not things of choice

CASHEL And did I choose
My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,
My springing muscle and untiring heart?
Did I implant the instinct in the race
That found a use for these, and said to me,
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine?

LYDIA But there are other callings in the
world.

CASHEL. Go tell thy painters to turn stock-
brokers,

Thy poet friends to stoop oer merchants'
desks

And pen prose records of the gains of greed
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker
Opes new careers Bid the professor quit
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the
world

The thing he would teach others Then

return

To me and say Cashel they have obeyed;
And on that pye of sacrifice I, too,
Will throw my championship

LYDIA But tis so cruel

CASHEL Is it so? I have hardly noticed that,
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,
That many a two days bruise hath ruthless
given,

Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty
years,

Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,
The world that robs the poor, and with their
spoil

Does what its tradesmen tell it Oh, your
ladies!

Sealskinned and egret-feathered; all defiance
To Nature; cowering if one say to them
"What will the servants think?" Your gentle-
men!

Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood
Make chickenbutchers And your medicine
men!

Groping for cures in the tormented entrails
Of friendly dogs Pray have you asked all
these

To change their occupations? Find you mine
So grimly crueller? I cannot breathe
An air so petty and so poisonous

LYDIA. But find you not their manners very
nice?

CASHEL To me, perfection Oh, they con-
descend

With a rare grace Your duke, who conde-
scends

Almost to the whole world, might for a Man
Pass in the eyes of those who never saw
The duke capped with a prince See then, ye
gods,

The duke turn footman, and his eager dame
Sink the great lady in the obsequious house-
maid!

Oh, at such moments I could wish the Court
Had but one breadbasket, that with my fist
I could make all its windy vanity
Gasp itself out on the gravel. Fare you well.
I did not choose my calling; but at least
I can refrain from being a gentleman.

LYDIA. You say farewell to me without a
pang.

CASHEL My calling hath apprenticed me to
pangs.

This is a rib-bender; but I can bear it

It is a lonely thing to be a champion

LYDIA It is a lonelier thing to be a woman

CASHEL Be lonely then Shall it be said of thee

That for his brawn thou misalliance mad'st
Wi' the Prince of Ruffians? Never Go thy ways,

Or, if thou hast nostalgia of the mud,
Wed some bedogged wretch that on the slot
Of gilded snobbery, *ventre à terre*,
Will hunt through life with eager nose on earth

And hang thee thick with diamonds I am rich,

But all my gold was fought for with my hands

LYDIA What dost thou mean by rich?

CASHEL There is a man,

Hight Paradise, vaunted unconquerable,
Hath dared to say he will be glad to hear from me

I have replied that none can hear from me
Until a thousand solid pounds be staked
His friends have confidently found the money

Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine,
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds
I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum

LYDIA Thou silly Cashel, tis but a week's income

I did propose to give thee three times that
For pocket money when we two were wed

CASHEL Give me my hat. I have been fooling here

Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought
That only in America such revenues
Were decent deemed Enough My dream is dreamed.

Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest

Farewell

LYDIA The golden mountain shall be thine

The day thou quitst thy horrible profession
CASHEL Tempt me not, woman It is honor calls

Slave to the Ring I rest until the face
Of Paradise be changed.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE Madam, your carriage,

Ordered by you at two Tis now half-past

CASHEL Sdeath! is it half-past two? The king! the king!

LYDIA The king! What mean you?

CASHEL I must meet a monarch

This very afternoon at Islington

LYDIA At Islington! You must be mad

CASHEL A cab!

Go call a cab, and let a cab be called,
And let the man that calls it be thy footman

LYDIA You are not well You shall not go alone

My carriage waits I must accompany you
I go to find my hat *[Exit*

CASHEL Like Paracelsus,
Who went to find his soul *[To Bashville]* And now, young man,

How comes it that a fellow of your inches
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me
On your next evening out. I'll make a man of you

Surely you are ambitious and aspire—

BASHVILLE To be a butler and draw corks, wherefore,

By Heaven, I will draw yours

[He hits Cashel on the nose and runs out]
CASHEL *[thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger to his nose, and studying the blood on it]* Too quick for me!

There's money in this youth

Re-enter LYDIA, hatted and gloved

LYDIA O Heaven! you bleed

CASHEL Lend me a key or other frigid object,

That I may put it down my back, and staunch

The welling life stream

LYDIA *[giving him her keys]* Oh, what have you done?

CASHEL Flush on the boko napped your footman's left

LYDIA I do not understand

CASHEL True Pardon me

I have received a blow upon the nose

In sport from Bashville Next, ablution, else
I shall be total gules *[He hurries out]*

LYDIA How well he speaks!

There is a silver trumpet in his lips
That stirs me to the finger ends His nose
Dropt lovely color tis a perfect blood
I would twere mingled with mine own!

Enter BASHVILLE

What now?

BASHVILLE Madam, the coachman can no longer wait

The horses will take cold

LYDIA I do beseech him

A moment's grace Oh, mockery of wealth!
The third class passenger unhidden rides

Whither and when he will obsequious trams
Await him hourly' subterranean tubes
With tireless coursers whisk him through the
town,

But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their
hay.

BASHVILLE Madam, an omnibus to Euston
Road,
And thence t' th' Angel—

Enter CASHIEL

LYDIA Let us haste, my love.
The coachman is impatient

CASHIEL Did he guess
He stays for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait
Pompei's sentinel Let us away
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,
Must ended be in merrie Islington

[Exeunt LYDIA and CASHIEL]

BASHVILLE Gods' how she hangs on's arm!
I am alone

Now let me lift the cover from my soul.
O wasted humbleness! Deluded diffidence!
How often have I said, Lie 'down, poor
footman'

She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt
Thy powder to the sky And now, by Heaven,
She stoops below me, condescends upon
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,
Writ in my character from my last place,
Would damn me into ostlerdom And yet
Theres an eternal justice in it, for
By so much as the ne'er subdued Indian
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian
Precedence take of me "*Ich dien*" Damna-
tion!

I serve My motto should have been, "I
scalp"

And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold
Because I love her I have blacked her boots,
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,
Doing in this the office of a boy,
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks
And does the meanest chares, I've shared the
passions

Of Cleopatra It has been my pride
To give her place the greater altitude
By lowering mine, and of her dignity
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace
As love for such a one as I would be
For such a one as she; and now! and now!
A prizefighter! O irony! O bathos!
To have made way for this! Oh, Bashville,

Bashville

Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,
So heavenly high of her? Let what will come,
My love must speak. twas my respect was
dumb

SCENE II

*The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded
with spectators In the arena a throne, with
a boxing ring before it A balcony above on
the right, occupied by persons of fasuon:
among others, Lydia and Lord Worthington
Flourish Enter LUCIAN and CETEWAYO, with
Chiefs in attendance*

CETEWAYO Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?
LUCIAN It is.

CETEWAYO Are these anæmic dogs the
English people?

LUCIAN Mislake us not for our complexions,
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our
factories,

And by the million patent kitchen ranges
Of happy English homes

CETEWAYO. When first I came
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous
altars

Of some infernal god I now perceive
The English dare not look upon the sky
They are moles and owls. they call upon the
soot

To cover them

LUCIAN You cannot understand
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo
You are a savage, reasoning like a child
Each pallid English face conceals a brain
Whose powers are proven in the works of
Newton

And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear
There is not one of all the thousands here
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,
Would presently construct a steam engine,
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes

CETEWAYO Have I been brought a million
miles by sea
To learn how men can lie! Know, Father
Webber,

Men become civilzed through twin diseases,
'Terror and Greed to wit. these two conjoined
Become the grisly parents of Invention.

Why does the trembling white with frantic
toil

Of hand and brain produce the magic gun
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu
Dares look his foe i' the face; fights foot to

foot,
 Lives in the present, drains the Here and
 Now,
 Makes life a long reality, and death
 A moment only, whilst your Englishman
 Glares on his burning candle's winding-
 sheets,
 Counting the steps of his approaching doom,
 And in the murky corners ever sees
 Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty
 In the which anguish an unnatural edge
 Comes on his frightened brain, which straight
 devises
 Strange frauds by which to filch unearned
 gold,
 Mad crafts by which to slay unfacéd foes,
 Until at last his agonized desire
 Makes possibility its slave And then—
 Horrible climax! All-undoing spite!—
 Th' importunate clutching of the coward's
 hand
 From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets
 Doth wrest; when straight the brave black-
 livered man
 Is blown explosively from off the globe,
 And Death and Dread, with their white-
 livered slaves,
 Oer-run the earth, and through their chatter-
 ing teeth
 Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest"
 Enough of this I came not here to talk
 Thou sayst thou hast two white-faced ones
 who dare
 Fight without guns, and spearless, to the
 death
 Let them be brought
 LUCIAN They fight not to the death,
 But under strictest rules as, for example,
 Half of their persons shall not be attacked;
 Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall
 down,
 Nor stroke of foot at any time And, further,
 That frequent opportunities of rest
 With succor and refreshment be secured
 them
 CETEWAYO Ye gods, what cowards! Zulu-
 land, my Zululand
 Personified Pusillanimity
 Hath taen thee from the bravest of the brave!
 LUCIAN Lo the rude savage whose un-
 tutored mind
 Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts
 That Brave and English mean the self-same
 thing!
 CETEWAYO Well, well, produce these

heroes. I surmise
 They will be earned by their nurses, lest
 Some barking dog or bumbling bee should
 scare them
 CETEWAYO takes his state Enter PARADISE
 LYDIA What hateful wretch is this whose
 mighty thews
 Presage destruction to his adversaries
 LORD WORTHINGTON Tis Paradise
 LYDIA He of whom Cashel spoke?
 A dreadful thought ices my heart Oh, why
 Did Cashel leave us at the door?
 Enter CASHEL
 LORD WORTHINGTON Behold!
 The champion comes
 LYDIA Oh, I could kiss him now
 Here, before all the world His boxing things
 Render him most attractive But I fear
 Yon villain's fists may maul him
 WORTHINGTON Have no fear
 Hark! the king speaks
 CETEWAYO Ye sons of the white
 queen
 Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to
 PARADISE Your royal highness, you beholds
 a bloke
 What gets his living honest by his fists
 I may not have the polish of some toffs
 As I could mention on, but up to now
 No man has took my number down I scale
 Close on twelve stun; my age is twenty-three,
 And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub
 Am to be heard of any day by such
 As likes the job I dont know, governor,
 As ennythink remains for me to say
 CETEWAYO Six wives and thirty oxen shalt
 thou have
 If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead
 Methinks he looks full scornfully on thee
 [To Cashel] Hal dost thou not so?
 CASHEL Sir, I do beseech you
 To name the bone, or limb, or special place
 Where you would have me hit him with this
 fist
 CETEWAYO Thou hast a noble brow; but
 much I fear
 Thine adversary will disfigure it
 CASHEL Theres a divinity that shapes our
 ends
 Rough hew them how we will Give me the
 gloves
 THE MASTER OF THE REVELS Paradise, a
 professor Cashel Byron,
 Also professor Time! [They spar
 LYDIA Eternity

It seems to me until this fight be done
 CASHEL Dread monarch this is called the
 upper cut,

And this a hook-hit of mine own invention.
 The hollow region where I plant this blow
 Is called the mark My left, you will observe,
 I chiefly use for long shots with my right
 Aiming beside the angle of the jaw
 And landing with a certain delicate screw
 I without violence knock my foeman out.
 Mark how he falls forward upon his face!
 The rules allow ten seconds to get up,
 And as the man is still quite silly, I
 Might safely finish him; but my respect
 For your most gracious majesty's desire
 To see some further triumphs of the science
 Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom

PARADISE How can a bloke do hisself proper
 justice
 With pillows on his fists?

[*He tears off his gloves and attacks Cashel
 with his bare knuckles*]

THE CROWD Unfair! The rules!
 CETEWAYO. The joy of battle surges boiling
 up

And bids me join the mellay Isandhlana
 And Victory! [*He falls on the bystanders*]

THE CHIEFS Victory and Isandhlana!
 [*They run amok General panic and stampede
 The ring is swept away.*]

LUCIAN Forbear these most irregular pro-
 ceedings.
 Police! Police!

[*He engages Cetewayo with his umbrella The
 balcony comes down with a crash Screams
 from its occupants. Indescribable confusion*]

CASHEL [*dragging Lydia from the struggling
 heap*] My love, my love, art hurt?

LYDIA No, no, but save my sore oer-
 matched cousin

A POLICEMAN. Give us a lead, sir Save the
 English flag
 Africa tramples on it

CASHEL. Africa!

Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders
 The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck
 Shall trample on the blue with spots of white
 Now, Lydia, mark thy lover [*He charges the
 Zulus.*]

LYDIA Hercules
 Cannot withstand him. See the king is down,
 The tallest chief is up, heels over head,
 Tossed corklike oer my Cashel's sinewy back,
 And his lieutenant all deflated gasps
 For breath upon the sand The others fly

In vain, his fist oer magic distances
 Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its
 mark;

And the last African upon his knees
 Sues piteously for quarter [*Rushing into
 Cashel's arms*] Oh, my hero.

Thoust saved us all this day.

CASHEL 'Twas all for thee
 CETEWAYO [*trying to rise*] Have I been struck
 by lightning?

LUCIAN Sir, your conduct
 Can only be described as most ungentle-
 manly

POLICEMAN One of the prone is white

CASHEL 'Tis Paradise.

POLICEMAN He's choking he has some-
 thing in his mouth

LYDIA [*to Cashel*] Oh Heaven! there is blood
 upon your hip
 You're hurt

CASHEL The morsel in yon wretch's mouth
 Was bitten out of me

[*Sensation Lydia screams and swoons in
 Cashel's arms*]

ACT III

*Willstoken A room in the Warren Lodge
 Lydia at her writing-table*

LYDIA O Past and Present, how ye do
 conflict

As here I sit writing my father's life!
 The autumn woodland woos me from without
 With whispering of leaves and dainty airs
 To leave this fruitless haunting of the past
 My father was a very learned man
 I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be
 Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me

Enter POLICEMAN

POLICEMAN Asking your ladyship to pardon
 me

For this intrusion, might I be so bold
 As ask a question of your people here
 Concerning the Queen's peace?

LYDIA My people here
 Are but a footman and a simple maid,
 And both have craved a holiday to join
 Some local festival But, sir, your helmet
 Proclaims the Metropolitan Police

POLICEMAN Madam, it does; and I may
 now inform you
 That what you term a local festival
 Is a most hideous outrage gainst the law,
 Which we to quell from London have come
 down

In short, a prizefight My sole purpose here
Is to inquire whether your ladyship
Any bad characters this afternoon
Has noted in the neighbourhood

LYDIA No, none, sir
I had not let my maid go forth today
Thought I the roads unsafe

POLICEMAN Fear nothing, madam
The force protects the fair My mission here
Is to wreak ultion for the broken law
I wish your ladyship good afternoon

LYDIA Good afternoon [*Exit POLICEMAN*]
A prizefight! O my heart!
Cashel hast thou deceived me? Can it be
Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling
I asked thee to eschew?

O wretched maid,
Why didst thou flee from London to this place
To write thy father's life, whenas in town
Thou mightst have kept a guardian eye on
him—

Whats that? A flying footstep—

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL Sanctuary!
The law is on my track What! Lydia here!
LYDIA Ay Lydia here Hast thou done
murder, then,

That in so horrible a guise thou comest?

CASHEL Murder! I would I had. Yon
cannibal

Hath forty thousand lives, and I have taen
But thousands thirty-nine I tell thee, Lydia,
On the impenetrable sarcolobe
That holds his seedling brain these fists have
pounded

By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour This bruised
grass

And cakéd mud adhering to my form
I have acquired in rolling on the sod
Clunched in his grip This scanty reefed coat
For decency snatched up as fast I fled
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish
Tis all too short, hence my display of rib
And forearm mother-naked Be not wroth
Because I seem to wink at you by Heaven,
Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye
Which I perforce keep closing. Pity me,
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything
I had hoped to win Oh, I could sit me
down

And weep for bitterness

LYDIA Thou wretch, begone

CASHEL Begone!

LYDIA I say begone Oh, tiger's

heart

Wrapped in a young man's hude, canst thou
not live

In love with Nature and at peace with Man?
Must thou, although thy hands were never
made

To blacken other's eyes, still batter at
The image of Divinity? I loathe thee
Hence from my house and never see me
more

CASHEL I go The meanest lad on thy estate
Would not betray me thus But tis no matter
[*He opens the door*]

Ha! the police I'm lost
[*He shuts the door again*]

Now shalt thou see
My last fight fought Exhausted as I am,
To capture me will cost the coppers dear
Come one, come all!

LYDIA Oh, hude thee, I implore
I cannot see thee hunted down like this
There is my room Conceal thyself therein
Quick, I command [*He goes into the room*]
With horror I foresee,
Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee

*Enter POLICEMAN, with PARADISE and
MELLISH in custody, BASHVILLE, con-
stables, and others*

POLICEMAN Keep back your bruised
prisoner lest he shock

This wellbred lady's nerves Your pardon,
maam,

But have you seen by chance the other one?
In this direction he was seen to run

LYDIA A man came here anon with bloody
hands

And aspect that did turn my soul to snow
POLICEMAN Twas he What said he?

LYDIA Begged for sanctuary
I bade the man begone

POLICEMAN Most properly
Saw you which way he went?

LYDIA I cannot tell
PARADISE He seen me coming, and he done
a bunk

POLICEMAN Peace, there Excuse his
damaged features, lady
He's Paradise, and this one's Byron's trainer,
Mellish

MELLISH Injurious copper, in thy teeth
I hurl the he I am no trainer, I
My father, a respected missionary,
Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age
T' the poetry writing To these woods I came

With Nature to commune My revery
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled
Mindful of what my sainted parent taught
I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo!
These minions of the law laid hands on me
BASHVILLE A lovely woman, with distracted
cries,

In most resplendent fashionable frock,
Approaches like a wounded antelope

Enter ADELAIDE GIBBORNE

ADELAIDE Where is my Cashel? Hath he
been arrested?

POLICEMAN I would I had thy Cashel by
the collar

He hath escaped me

ADELAIDE Praises be for ever!

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man
thy Cashel?

ADELAIDE He is mine only son

ALL Thy son!

ADELAIDE My son

LYDIA. I thought his mother hardly would
have known him,

So crushed his countenance

ADELAIDE A ribald peer,
Lord Worthington by name, this morning
came

With honeyed words beseeching me to
mount

His four-in-hand, and to the country hie
To see some English sport Being by nature
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,
But took so long to dress that the design
Failed of its full effect, for not until
The final round we reached the horrid scene.
Be silent, all, for now I do approach
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,
That Heaven did bless me with an only son,
A boy devoted to his doting mother—

POLICEMAN Hark! did you hear an oath
from yonder room?

ADELAIDE Respect a broken-hearted
mother's grief,

And do not interrupt me in my scene
Ten years ago my darling disappeared
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous
tears,

Tears that have left me prematurely aged,
For I am younger far than I appear).
Judge of my anguish when today I saw
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a
demon

With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son!

ALL O strange event! O passing tearful

tale!

ADELAIDE I thank you from the bottom
of my heart

For the reception you have given my woe;
And now I ask, where is my wretched son?
He must at once come home with me, and
quit

A course of life that cannot be allowed

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL Policeman I do yield me to the
law

LYDIA. Oh no

ADELAIDE. My son!

CASHEL. My mother! Do not kiss me.

My visage is too sore

POLICEMAN The lady hid him

This is a regular plant You cannot be

Up to that sex [*To Cashel*] You come along
with me

LYDIA Fear not, my Cashel I will bail thee
out.

CASHEL Never. I do embrace my doom
with joy.

With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland

I shall feel safe there are no mothers there

ADELAIDE Ungracious boy—

CASHEL Constable bear me hence

MELLISH Oh, let me sweetest reconcile-
ment make

By calling to thy mind that moving song —
[*Sings*] They say there is no other—

CASHEL. Forbear at once, or the next note
of music

That falls upon thine ear shall clang in
thunder

From the last trumpet

ADELAIDE. A disgraceful threat

To level at this virtuous old man

LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scornst thy
mother thus,

How wilt thou treat thy wife?

CASHEL There spake my fate.

I knew you would say that Oh, mothers,
mothers,

Would you but let your wretched sons alone
Life were worth living! Had I any choice
In this importunate relationship?

None And until that high auspicious day
When the millennium on an orphaned world
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother
And I within the self-same hemisphere
Conjointly may not dwell

ADELAIDE Ungentlemanly!

CASHEL. I am no gentleman I am a criminal,

Redhanded, baseborn—

ADELAIDE Baseborn! Who dares say it?
Thou art the son and heir of Bingley Bumpkin
FitzAlgernon de Courcy Cashel Byron,
Sieur of Park Lane and Overlord of Dorset,
Who after three months wedded happiness
Rashly fordid himself with prussic acid,
Leaving a tearstained note to testify
That having sweetly honeymooned with me,
He now could say, O Death, where is thy
sting?

POLICEMAN Sir had I known your quality,
this cop
I had averted, but it is too late
The law's above us both

Enter LUCIAN, with an Order in Council
LUCIAN Not so, policeman
I bear a message from The Throne itself
Of fullest amnesty for Byron's past
Nay, more of Dorset deputy lieutenant
He is proclaimed Further, it is decreed,
In memory of his glorious victory
Over our country's foes at Islington,
The flag of England shall for ever bear
On azure field twelve swanhke spots of white,
And by an exercise of feudal right
Too long disused in this anarchic age
Our sovereign doth confer on him the hand
Of Miss Carew, Wiltstoken's wealthy heiress

[General acclamation
POLICEMAN Was anything, sir, said about
me?

LUCIAN Thy faithful services are not forgot
In future call thyself Inspector Smith

[Renewed acclamation
POLICEMAN I thank you, sir I thank you,
gentlemen.

LUCIAN My former opposition, valiant
champion,
Was based on the supposed discrepancy
Betwixt your rank and Lydia's Heres my
hand

BASHVILLE And I do here unselfishly re-
nounce
All my pretensions to my lady's favor.

[Sensation
LYDIA What, Bashville! didst thou love me?

BASHVILLE Madam yes
Tis said now let me leave immediately

LYDIA In taking, Bashville, this most
tasteful course

You are but acting as a gentleman
In the like case would act I fully grant
Your perfect right to make a declaration
Which flatters me and honors your ambition

Prior attachment bids me firmly say
That whilst my Cashel lives, and polyandry
Rests foreign to the British social scheme,
Your love is hopeless, still, your services,
Made zealous by disinterested passion,
Would greatly add to my domestic comfort,
And if—

CASHEL Excuse me I have other views
I've noted in this man such aptitude
For art and exercise in his defence
That I prognosticate for him a future
More glorious than my past Henceforth I
dub him

The Admirable Bashville, Byron's Novice,
And to the utmost of my mended fortunes
Will back him gainst the world at ten stone
six

ALL Hail, Byron's Novice, champion that
shall be!

BASHVILLE Must I renounce my lovely
lady's service
And mar the face of man?

CASHEL 'Tis Fate's decree
For know, rash youth, that in this star crost
world

Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good
In what we can, and not in what we would

POLICEMAN A post-horn—hark!
CASHEL. What noise of wheels is this?
*Lord Worthington drives upon the scene in his
four-in-hand, and descends*

ADELAIDE. Perfidious peer!
LORD WORTHINGTON Sweet Adelaide—
ADELAIDE Forbear,

Audacious one my name is Mrs Byron
LORD WORTHINGTON Oh, change that title
for the sweeter one

Of Lady Worthington
CASHEL. Unhappy man,

You know not what you do

LYDIA Nay, tis a match
Of most auspicious promise Dear Lord
Worthington,

You tear from us our mother-in-law—
CASHEL Hal True.

LYDIA —but we will make the sacrifice
She blushes

At least she very prettily produces
Blushing's effect

ADELAIDE My lord I do accept you.
[They embrace Rejoicings

CASHEL [*aside*] It wrings my heart to see
my noble backer

Lay waste his future thus The world's a
chess-board,

And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate
 [Aloud] And now, my friends, gentle and
 simple both,

Our scene draws to a close. In lawful course
 As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I
 Do pardon all concerned this afternoon
 In the late gross and brutal exhibition
 Of miscalled sport.

LYDIA [throwing herself into his arms] Your
 boats are burnt at last

CASHIEL This is the face that burnt a
 thousand boats,

And ravished Cashiel Byron from the ring
 But to conclude Let William Paradise
 Devote himself to science, and acquire,
 By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,

A more refined address You, Robert Mellish,
 To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him,
 Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson
 Limit his access to the fatal tap
 Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,
 And to St George's Church, whose portico
 Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit
 Street,

Repair we all Strike up the wedding march;
 And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth
 Broad o'er the wold as fast we bowl along
 Give me the post-horn Loose the flowing
 rein,

And up to London drive with might and
 main [Exeunt]

THE END

XXXV

PRESS CUTTINGS

A TOPICAL SKETCH COMPILED FROM THE EDITORIAL AND
 CORRESPONDENCE COLUMNS OF THE DAILY PAPERS DURING
 THE WOMEN'S WAR IN 1909

*The forenoon of the first of April, three years
 hence*

*General Mitchener is at his writing-table in
 the War Office, opening letters On his left is the
 fireplace, with a fire burning On his right,
 against the opposite wall, is a standing desk with
 an office stool The door is in the wall behind him,
 half-way between the table and the desk The
 table is not quite in the middle of the room it is
 nearer to the hearthrug than to the desk There is
 a chair at each end of it for persons having busi-
 ness with the General There is a telephone on the
 table*

Long silence

A VOICE FROM THE STREET Votes for Women!

*The General starts convulsively, snatches a
 revolver from a drawer, and listens in an agony
 of apprehension Nothing happens He puts the
 revolver back, ashamed; wipes his brow; and re-
 sumes his work He is startled afresh by the entry
 of an Orderly This Orderly is an unsoldierly,
 slovenly, discontented young man*

MITCHENER Oh, it's only you Well?

THE ORDERLY. Another one, sir. She's
 chained herself.

MITCHENER Chained herself? How? To what?
 We've taken away the railings and everything
 that a chain can be passed through

THE ORDERLY. We forgot the door-scraper,
 sir She lay down on the flags and got the
 chain through before she started hollerin
 She's lyn there now, and she downfaces us
 that you've got the key of the padlock in a
 letter in a buff envelope, and that you'll see
 her when you open it

MITCHENER She's mad Have the scraper
 dug up and let her go home with it hanging
 round her neck

THE ORDERLY There is a buff envelope
 there, sir

MITCHENER. You're all afraid of these women.
 [He picks the letter up] It does seem to have a
 key in it [He opens the letter; takes out a key
 and a note; and reads] "Dear Mitch"—Well,
 I'm dashed!

THE ORDERLY. Yes, sir.

MITCHENER What do you mean by Yes, sir?

THE ORDERLY Well, you said you was
 dashed, sir, and you did look—if you'll excuse
 my saying it, sir—well, you looked it

MITCHENER [who has been reading the letter,
 and is too astonished to attend to the Orderly's
 reply] This is a letter from the Prime Minister
 asking me to release the woman with this key
 if she padlocks herself, and to have her shewn
 up and see her at once.

THE ORDERLY [*tremulously*] Dont do it, governor

MITCHENER [*angrily*] How often have I ordered you not to address me as governor? Remember that you are a soldier and not a vulgar civilian Remember also that when a man enters the army he leaves fear behind him Heres the key Unlock her and shew her up

THE ORDERLY Me unlock her! I dursent Lord knows what she'd do to me

MITCHENER [*pepperily, rising*] Obey your orders instantly, sir, and dont presume to argue Even if she kills you, it is your duty to die for your country Right about face March

The Orderly goes out, trembling

THE VOICE OUTSIDE Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women!

MITCHENER [*mimicking her*] Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women! [*In his natural voice*] Votes for children! Votes for babies! Votes for monkeys! [*He posts himself on the hearthrug and awaits the enemy*]

THE ORDERLY [*outside*] In you go [*He pushes a panting Suffraget into the room*] The person, sir [*He withdraws*]

The Suffraget takes off her tailor-made skirt and reveals a pair of fashionable trousers

MITCHENER [*horrified*] Stop, madam What are you doing? you must not undress in my presence I protest Not even your letter from the Prime Minister—

THE SUFFRAGET My dear Mitchener I am the Prime Minister [*He takes off his hat and cloak, throws them on the desk, and confronts the General in the ordinary costume of a Cabinet Minister*]

MITCHENER Good heavens! Balsquith!

BALSQUITH [*throwing himself into Mitchener's chair*] Yes it is indeed Balsquith It has come to this that the only way the Prime Minister of England can get from Downing Street to the War Office is by assuming this disguise, shrieking "VOTES FOR WOMEN", and chaining himself to your doorscraper They were at the corner in force They cheered me Bella-christina herself was there She shook my hand and told me to say I was a vegetarian, as the diet was better in Holloway for vegetarians

MITCHENER. Why didn't you telephone?

BALSQUITH They tap the telephone Every switchboard in London is in their hands, or in those of their young men

MITCHENER Where on earth did you get

the dress? I hope it's not a French dress!

BALSQUITH Great heavens, no We're not allowed even to put on our gloves with French chalk Everything's labelled "Made in Canberwell"

MITCHENER As a Tariff Reformer, I must say Quite right [*Balsquith has a strong controversial impulse and is evidently going to dispute this profession of faith*] No matter Dont argue What have you come for?

BALSQUITH Sandstone has resigned

MITCHENER [*amazed*] Old Red resigned!

BALSQUITH Resigned

MITCHENER But how? Why? Oh, impossible! the proclamation of martial law last Tuesday made Sandstone virtually Dictator in the metropolis, and to resign now is flat desertion

BALSQUITH Yes, yes, my dear Mitchener I know all that as well as you do I argued with him until I was black in the face, and he so red about the neck that if I had gone on he would have burst He is furious because we have abandoned his plan

MITCHENER But you accepted it unconditionally

BALSQUITH Yes, before we knew what it was It was unworkable, you know

MITCHENER I dont know Why is it unworkable?

BALSQUITH I mean the part about drawing a cordon round Westminster at a distance of two miles, and turning all women out of it

MITCHENER A masterpiece of strategy Let me explain The Suffragets are a very small body, but they are numerous enough to be troublesome—even dangerous—when they are all concentrated in one place—say in Parliament Square But by making a two-mile radius and pushing them beyond it, you scatter their attack over a circular line twelve miles long Just what Wellington would have done

BALSQUITH But the women wont go

MITCHENER Nonsense they must go

BALSQUITH They wont

MITCHENER. What does Sandstone say?

BALSQUITH He says Shoot them down

MITCHENER Of course

BALSQUITH Youre not serious?

MITCHENER I'm perfectly serious

BALSQUITH But you cant shoot them down! Women, you know!

MITCHENER [*straddling confidently*] Yes you can Strange as it may seem to you as a

civilian, Balsquith, if you point a rifle at a woman and fire it, she will drop exactly as a man drops

BALSQUITH But suppose your own daughters—Helen and Georgina—

MITCHENER My daughters would not dream of disobeying the proclamation [*As an after-thought*] At least Helen wouldnt.

BALSQUITH But Georgina?

MITCHENER Georgina would if she knew she'd be shot if she didnt. Thats how the thing would work. Military methods are really the most merciful in the end. You keep sending these misguided women to Holloway and killing them slowly and inhumanly by ruining their health, and it does no good. They go on worse than ever. Shoot a few promptly and humanely, and there will be an end at once of all resistance and of all the suffering that resistance entails.

BALSQUITH But public opinion would never stand it.

MITCHENER [*walking about and laying down the law*] There's no such thing as public opinion.

BALSQUITH No such thing as public opinion!

MITCHENER Absolutely no such thing. There are certain persons who entertain certain opinions. Well, shoot them down. When you have shot them down, there are no longer any persons entertaining those opinions alive, consequently there is no longer any more of the public opinion you are so much afraid of. Grasp that fact, my dear Balsquith; and you have grasped the secret of government. Public opinion is mind. Mind is inseparable from matter. Shoot down the matter and you kill the mind.

BALSQUITH But hang it all—

MITCHENER [*intolerantly*] No I wont hang it all. It's no use coming to me and talking about public opinion. You have put yourself into the hands of the army, and you are committed to military methods. And the basis of all military methods is that when people wont do what they're told to do, you shoot them down.

BALSQUITH. Oh yes; it's all jolly fine for you and Old Red. You dont depend on votes for your places. What do you suppose would happen at the next election?

MITCHENER Have no next election. Bring in a Bill at once repealing all the Reform Acts and vesting the Government in a properly trained magistracy responsible only to a Council of War. It answers perfectly in India.

If anyone objects, shoot him down.

BALSQUITH But none of the members of my party would be on the Council of War. Neither should I. Do you expect us to vote for making ourselves nobodies?

MITCHENER You'll have to, sooner or later, or the Socialists will make nobodies of the lot of you by collaring every penny you possess. Do you suppose this damned democracy can be allowed to go on now that the mob is beginning to take it seriously and using its power to lay hands on property? Parliament must abolish itself. The Irish parliament voted for its own extinction. The English parliament will do the same if the same means are taken to persuade it.

BALSQUITH That would cost a lot of money.

MITCHENER Not money necessarily. Bribe them with titles.

BALSQUITH Do you think we dare?

MITCHENER [*scornfully*] Dare! Dare! What is life but daring, man? "To dare, to dare, and again to dare—"

FEMALE VOICE IN THE STREET Votes for Women! [*Mitchener, revolver in hand, rushes to the door and locks it. Balsquith hides under the table*] Votes for Women!

A shot is heard

BALSQUITH [*emerging in the greatest alarm*] Good heavens, you havnt given orders to fire on them. Have you?

MITCHENER No, but it's a sentinel's duty to fire on anyone who persists in attempting to pass without giving the word.

BALSQUITH [*wiping his brow*] This military business is really awful.

MITCHENER. Be calm, Balsquith. These things must happen. They save bloodshed in the long run, believe me. I've seen plenty of it, and I know.

BALSQUITH I havnt; and I dont know. I wish those guns didnt make such a devil of a noise. We must adopt Maxim's Silencer for the army rifles if we're going to shoot women. I really couldnt stand hearing it. [*Someone outside tries to open the door and then knocks*] Whats that?

MITCHENER Who's there?

THE ORDERLY It's only me, governor. It's all right.

MITCHENER [*unlocking the door and admitting the Orderly, who comes between them*] What was it?

THE ORDERLY Suffraget, sir.

BALSQUITH Did the sentry shoot her?

have received the fullest satisfaction.

BALSQUITH What satisfaction?

MITCHENER Chubbs-Jenkinson would have been reprimanded In fact, he was reprimanded Besides, the man was thoroughly insubordinate You cant deny that the very first thing he did when they took him down after flogging him was to walk up to Chubbs-Jenkinson and break his jaw That shewed there was no use flogging him; so now he will get two years' hard labor, and serve him right!

BALSQUITH I bet you a guinea he wont get even a week. I bet you another that Chubbs-Jenkinson apologizes abjectly You evidently havnt heard the news.

MITCHENER What news?

BALSQUITH It turns out that the curate is well connected [*Mitchener staggers at the shock He reels into his chair and buries his face in his hands over the blotter*] He has three aunts in the peerage, Lady Richmond's one of them [*Mitchener punctuates these announcements with heartrending groans*]; and they all adore him The invitations for six garden parties and fourteen dances have been cancelled for all the subalterns in Chubb's regiment [*Mitchener attempts to shoot himself*]

BALSQUITH [*seizing the pistol*] No. your country needs you, Mitchener.

MITCHENER [*putting down the pistol*] For my country's sake [*Balsquith, reassured, sits down*] But what an infernal young fool Chubbs-Jenkinson is, not to know the standing of his man better! Why didnt he know? It was his business to know. He ought to be flogged.

BALSQUITH Probably he will be, by the other subalterns

MITCHENER I hope so Anyhow, out he goes Out of the army. He or I.

BALSQUITH Steady, steady His father has subscribed a million to the party funds We owe him a peerage

MITCHENER. I dont care

BALSQUITH. I do How do you think parties are kept up? Not by the subscriptions of the local associations, I hope They dont pay for the gas at the meetings.

MITCHENER Man' can you not be serious? Here are we, face to face with Lady Richmond's grave displeasure; and you talk to me about gas and subscriptions Her own nephew!!!!

BALSQUITH [*gloomily*] It's unfortunate He

was at Oxford with Bobby Bessborough.

MITCHENER Worse and worse What shall we do?

A VOICE IN THE STREET Votes for Women! Votes for Women!

A terrific explosion shakes the building They take no notice

MITCHENER [*breaking down*] You dont know what this means to me, Balsquith I love the army. I love my country

BALSQUITH It certainly is rather awkward.

The Orderly comes in

MITCHENER [*angrily*] What is it? How dare you interrupt us like this?

THE ORDERLY. Didn't you hear the explosion, sir?

MITCHENER Explosion What explosion? No I heard no explosion. I have something more serious to attend to than explosions. Great heavens! Lady Richmond's nephew has been treated like any common laborer; and while England is reeling under the shock, a private walks in and asks me if I heard an explosion

BALSQUITH. By the way, what was the explosion?

THE ORDERLY Only a sort of bombshell, sir.

BALSQUITH Bombshell!

THE ORDERLY A pasteboard one, sir Full of papers with Votes for Women in red letters Fired into the yard from the roof of the Alliance Office

MITCHENER Pooh! Go away GO away.

The Orderly, bewildered, goes out

BALSQUITH Mitchener you can save the country yet Put on your full dress uniform and your medals and orders and so forth Get a guard of honor—something showy—horse guards or something of that sort; and call on the old girl—

MITCHENER The old girl?

BALSQUITH Well, Lady Richmond Apologize to her Ask her leave to accept the command Tell her that youve made the curate your adjutant or your aide-de-camp or whatever is the proper thing. By the way, what can you make him?

MITCHENER. I might make him my chaplain. I dont see why I shouldnt have a chaplain on my staff He shewed a very proper spirit in punching that young cub's head I should have done the same myself.

BALSQUITH Then Ive your promise to take command if Lady Richmond consents?

MITCHENER. On condition that I have a free

hand. No nonsense about public opinion or democracy

BALSQUITH As far as possible, I think I may say yes

MITCHENER [*rising intolerantly and going to the hearthrug*] That wont do for me Dont be weak-kneed, Balsquith You know perfectly well that the real government of this country is and always must be the government of the masses by the classes You know that democracy is damned nonsense, and that no class stands less of it than the working class You know that we are already discussing the steps that will have to be taken if the country should ever be face to face with the possibility of a Labor majority in Parliament You know that in that case we should disfranchise the mob, and if they made a fuss, shoot them down You know that if we need public opinion to support us, we can get any quantity of it manufactured in our papers by poor devils of journalists who will sell their souls for five shillings You know—

BALSQUITH Stop Stop, I say I dont know That is the difference between your job and mine, Mitchener After twenty years in the army a man thinks he knows everything After twenty months in the Cabinet he knows that he knows nothing

MITCHENER We learn from history—

BALSQUITH We learn from history that men never learn anything from history That's not my own it's Hegel

MITCHENER Who's Hegel?

BALSQUITH Dead. A German philosopher [*He half rises, but recollects something and sits down again*] Oh, confound it that reminds me The Germans have laid down four more Dreadnoughts

MITCHENER Then you must lay down twelve

BALSQUITH Oh yes it's easy to say that, but think of what they'll cost

MITCHENER Think of what it would cost to be invaded by Germany and forced to pay an indemnity of five hundred millions

BALSQUITH But you said that if you got compulsory military service there would be an end of the danger of invasion

MITCHENER On the contrary, my dear fellow, it increases the danger tenfold, because it increases German jealousy of our military supremacy

BALSQUITH After all, why should the Germans invade us?

MITCHENER Why shouldnt they? What else has their army to do? What else are they building a navy for?

BALSQUITH Well, we never think of invading Germany

MITCHENER Yes, we do I have thought of nothing else for the last ten years Say what you will, Balsquith, the Germans have never recognized, and until they get a stern lesson they never will recognize, the plain fact that the interests of the British Empire are paramount, and that the command of the sea belongs by nature to England

BALSQUITH But if they wont recognize it, what can I do?

MITCHENER Shoot them down

BALSQUITH I cant shoot them down

MITCHENER Yes you can You dont realize it, but if you fire a rifle into a German he drops just as surely as a rabbit does

BALSQUITH But dash it all, man, a rabbit hasnt got a rifle and a German has Suppose he shoots you down

MITCHENER Excuse me, Balsquith, but that consideration is what we call cowardice in the army A soldier always assumes that he is going to shoot, not to be shot

BALSQUITH [*jumping up and nalking about sulkily*] Oh come! I like to hear you military people talking of cowardice Why, you spend your lives in an ecstasy of terror of imaginary invasions I dont believe you ever go to bed without looking under it for a burglar

MITCHENER [*calmly*] A very sensible precaution, Balsquith I always take it, and, in consequence, Ive never been burgled

BALSQUITH Neither have I Anyhow, dont you taunt me with cowardice [*He posts himself on the hearthrug beside Mitchener, on his left*] I never look under my bed for a burglar I'm not always looking under the nation's bed for an invader And if it comes to fighting, I'm quite willing to fight without being three to one

MITCHENER. These are the romantic ravings of a Jingo civilian, Balsquith At least youll not deny that the absolute command of the sea is essential to our security

BALSQUITH The absolute command of the sea is essential to the security of the principality of Monaco But Monaco isnt going to get it.

MITCHENER And consequently Monaco enjoys no security What a frightful thing! How do the inhabitants sleep with the possibility of invasion, of bombardment, continually

present to their minds? Would you have our English slumbers broken in the same way? Are we also to live without security?

BALSQUITH [*dogmatically*] Yes. There's no such thing as security in the world; and there never can be as long as men are mortal. England will be secure when England is dead, just as the streets of London will be safe when there's no longer a man in her streets to be run over or a vehicle to run over him. When you military chaps ask for security you are crying for the moon.

MITCHENER [*very seriously*] Let me tell you, Balsquith, that in these days of aeroplanes and Zeppelin airships the question of the moon is becoming one of the greatest importance. It will be reached at no very distant date. Can you, as an Englishman, tamely contemplate the possibility of having to live under a German moon? The British flag must be planted there at all hazards.

BALSQUITH My dear Mitchener, the moon is outside practical politics. I'd swap it for a coaling-station tomorrow with Germany or any other Power sufficiently military in its way of thinking to attach any importance to it.

MITCHENER [*losing his temper*] You are the friend of every country but your own.

BALSQUITH Say nobody's enemy but my own. It sounds nicer. You really needn't be so horribly afraid of the other countries. They're all in the same fix as we are. I'm much more interested in the death-rate in Lambeth than in the German fleet.

MITCHENER You daren't say that in Lambeth.

BALSQUITH I'll say it the day after you publish your scheme for invading Germany and repealing all the Reform Acts.

The Orderly comes in.

MITCHENER What do you want?

THE ORDERLY I don't want anything, governor, thank you. The secretary and president of the Anti-Suffraget League says they had an appointment with the Prime Minister, and that they've been sent on here from Downing Street.

BALSQUITH [*going to the table*] Quite right. I forgot them. [*To Mitchener*] Would you mind my seeing them here? I feel extraordinarily grateful to these women for standing by us and facing the Suffragets, especially as they are naturally the gentler and timider sort of women. [*The Orderly moans*] Did you say

anything?

THE ORDERLY No, sir.

BALSQUITH Did you catch their names?

THE ORDERLY Yes, sir. The president is Lady Corinthia Fanshawe, and the secretary is Mrs Banger.

MITCHENER [*abruptly*] Mrs what?

THE ORDERLY Mrs Banger.

BALSQUITH Curious that quiet people always seem to have violent names.

THE ORDERLY Not much quiet about her, sir.

MITCHENER [*outraged*] Attention! Speak when you're spoken to. Hold your tongue when you're not. Right about face. March. [*The Orderly obeys*] That's the way to keep these chaps up to the mark. [*The Orderly returns*] Back again! What do you mean by this mutiny?

THE ORDERLY. What am I to say to the ladies, sir?

BALSQUITH You don't mind my seeing them somewhere, do you?

MITCHENER Not at all. Bring them in to see me when you've done with them. I understand that Lady Corinthia is a very fascinating woman. Who is she, by the way?

BALSQUITH Daughter of Lord Broadstairs, the automatic turbine man. Gave quarter of a million to the party funds. She's musical and romantic and all that—don't hunt. hates politics. stops in town all the year round. one never sees her except at the opera and at musical at-homes and so forth.

MITCHENER What a life! [*To the Orderly*] Where are the ladies?

THE ORDERLY In No. 17, sir.

MITCHENER Shew Mr Balsquith there, and send Mrs Farrell here.

THE ORDERLY [*calling into the corridor*] Mrs Farrell! [*To Balsquith*] This way, sir. [*He goes out with Balsquith*].

Mrs Farrell, a lean, highly respectable Irish charwoman of about fifty, comes in.

MITCHENER Mrs Farrell. I've a very important visit to pay. I shall want my full dress uniform and all my medals and orders and my presentation sword. There was a time when the British Army contained men capable of discharging these duties for their commanding officer. Those days are over. The compulsorily enlisted soldier runs to a woman for everything. I'm therefore reluctantly obliged to trouble you.

MRS FARRELL. Your meddles n ordhers n the

crooked sword with the ivory handle n your full dress uniform is in the waxworks in the Chamber o Military Glory over in the place they used to call the Banquetin Hall I told you youd be sorry for sendin them away, and you told me to mind me own business Youre wiser now

MITCHENER. I am I had not at that time discovered that you were the only person in the whole military establishment of this capital who could be trusted to remember where anything was, or to understand an order and obey it

MRS FARRELL. It's no good flattherin me I'm too old

MITCHENER. Not at all, Mrs Farrell How is your daughter?

MRS FARRELL. Which daughter?

MITCHENER. The one who has made such a gratifying success in the Music Halls

MRS FARRELL. Theres no Music Halls nowadays theyre Variety Theatres She's got an offer of marriage from a young jook

MITCHENER. Is it possible? What did you do?

MRS FARRELL. I told his mother on him

MITCHENER. Oh! What did she say?

MRS FARRELL. She was as pleased as Punch Thank Heaven, she says, he's got somebody thatll be able to keep him when the supertax is put up to twenty shillings in the pound

MITCHENER. But your daughter herself? What did she say?

MRS FARRELL. Accepted him, of course What else would a young fool like her do? He inthrojooiced her to the Poet Laureate, thunkin she'd inspire him

MITCHENER. Did she?

MRS FARRELL. Faith, I dunna All I know is she walked up to him as bold as brass n said, "Write me a sketch, dear " After all the throuble Ive took with that child's manners she's no more notion how to behave herself than a pig Youll have to wear General Sandstone's uniform it's the only one in the place, because he wont lend it to the shows

MITCHENER. But Sandstone's clothes wont fit me

MRS FARRELL [*unmoved*] Then you'll have to fit them Why shouldnt they fitchya as well as they fitted General Blake at the Mansion House?

MITCHENER. They didnt fit him He looked a frightful guy

MRS FARRELL. Well, you must do the best

you can with them You cant exhibit your clothes and wear them too.

MITCHENER. And the public thinks the lot of a commanding officer a happy one! Oh, if they could only see the seamy side of it [*He returns to his table to resume work*]

MRS FARRELL. If they could only see the seamy side o General Sandstone's uniform, where his flask rubs agen the buckle of his braces, theyd tell him he ought to get a new one Let alone the way he swears at me

MITCHENER. When a man has risked his life on eight battlefields, Mrs Farrell, he has given sufficient proof of his self-control to be excused a little strong language

MRS FARRELL. Would you put up with bad language from me because Ive risked me life eight times in childbed?

MITCHENER. My dear Mrs Farrell, you surely would not compare a risk of that harmless domestic kind to the fearful risks of the battlefield

MRS FARRELL. I wouldnt compare risks run to bear livin people into the world to risks run to blow dhem out of it A mother's risk is jooty a soldier's is nothin but divilmint

MITCHENER [*nettled*]. Let me tell you, Mrs Farrell, that if the men did not fight, the women would have to fight themselves We spare you that at all events

MRS FARRELL. You cant help yourselves If three-quarters of you was killed we could replace you with the help of the other quarter If three-quarters of us was killed how many people would there be in England in another generation? If it wasnt for that, the men'd put the fighting on us just as they put all the other dhrudgery What would you do if we was all kalt? Would you go to bed and have twins?

MITCHENER. Really, Mrs Farrell, you must discuss these questions with a medical man You make me blush, positively

MRS FARRELL [*grumbling to herself*]. A good job too If I could have made Farrell blush I wouldnt have had to risk me life so often. You n your risks n your bravery n your self-control indeed! "Why dont you conthrol yourself?" I sez to Farrell "It's agen me religion," he sez

MITCHENER [*plaintively*]. Mrs Farrell youre a woman of very powerful mind I'm not qualified to argue these delicate matters with you I ask you to spare me, and to be good enough to take these clothes to Mr

Balsquith when the ladies leave.

The Orderly comes in

THE ORDERLY Lady Cornithia Fanshawe and Mrs Banger want to see you, sir Mr Balsquith told me to tell you

MRS FARRELL. Theyve come about the vote. I dont know whether it's dhem dhat want it or dhem dhat doesnt want it. anyhow, theyre all alike when they get into a state about it. [*She goes out, having gathered Balsquith's Suffraget disguise from the desk*].

MITCHENER Is Mr Balsquith not with them.

THE ORDERLY. No, sir. Couldn't stand Mrs Banger, I expect. Fair caution she is [*Chuckling*] Couldnt help larfin when I sor im op it.

MITCHENER [*highly incensed*] How dare you indulge in this unseemly mirth in the presence of your commanding officer? Have you no sense of a soldier's duty?

THE ORDERLY [*sadly*] I'm afraid I shant ever get the ang of it, sir. You see, my father has a tidy little barber's business down off Shore-ditch, and I was brought up to be chatty and easy-like with everybody I tell you, when I drew the number in the conscription it gev my old mother the needle and it gev me the ump I should take it very kind, sir, if youd let me off the drill and let me shave you instead. Youd appreciate my qualities then you would indeed, sir I shant never do myself justice at soljerin, sir I cant bring myself to think of it as proper work for a man with an active mind, as you might say, sir Arf of it's only ousemaidin, and tother arf is dress-up and make-believe.

MITCHENER Stuff, sir It's the easiest life in the world Once you learn your drill, all you have to do is to hold your tongue and obey your orders.

THE ORDERLY But I do assure you, sir, arf the time theyre the wrong orders; and I get into trouble when I obey them The sergeant's orders is all right, but the officers dont know what theyre talkin about. Why, the orses knows better sometimes. "Fours," says Lieutenant Trevor at the gate of Bucknam Palace only this mornin when we was on dooty for a State visit to the Coal Trust I was fourth man like in the first file; and when I started the orse eld back, and the sergeant was on to me straight Threes, you bally fool, e whispers An e was on to me again about it when we come back, and called me a fathead, e did What am I to do, I says. the lieutenant's orders was fours, I says I'll shew you who's

lieutenant here, e says. In future you attend to my orders and not to iz, e says what does e know about it? e says You didnt give me any orders, I says Couldnt you see for yourself there wasnt room for fours, e says why cant you think? General Mitchener tells me I'm not to think, but to obey orders, I says Is Mitchener your sergeant or am I? e says in his bullyin way You are, I says Well, e says, you got to do what your sergeant tells you that's discipline, e says And what am I to do for the General? I says. Youre to let him talk, e says. thats what e's for.

MITCHENER [*groaning*] It is impossible for the human mind to conceive anything more dreadful than this Youre a disgrace to the service.

THE ORDERLY [*deeply wounded*] The service is a disgrace to me. When my mother's people pass me in the street with this uniform on, I arldy know which way to look There never was a soldier in my family before.

MITCHENER There never was anything else in mine, sir.

THE ORDERLY My mother's second cousin was one of the Parkinsons o Stepney. [*Almost in tears*] What do you know of the feelings of a resepectable family in the middle station of life? I cant bear to be looked down on as a common soldier Why cant my father be let buy my discharge? Youve done away with the soldier's right to ave his discharge bought for him by his relations The country didnt know you were going to do that or it'd never ave stood it Is an Englishman to be made a mockery like this?

MITCHENER Silence Attention Right about face March

THE ORDERLY [*retiring to the standing desk and bedewing it with passionate tears*] Oh that I should have lived to be spoke to as if I was the lowest of the low! Me! that has shaved a City o London alderman wiv me own and

MITCHENER. Poltroon Crybaby. Well, better disgrace yourself here than disgrace your country on the field of battle

THE ORDERLY [*angrily coming to the table*] Who's going to disgrace his country on the field of battle? It's not fightin I object to: it's soljerin Shew me a German and I'll ave a go at him as fast as you or any man. But to ave me time wasted like this, an be stuck in a sentry-box at a street corner for an ornament to be stared at; and to be told

"right about face march," if I speak as one man to another that ant pluck that ant fightin that ant patriotism it's bein made a bloomin sheep of

MITCHENER A sheep has many valuable military qualities Emulate them, dont disparage them

THE ORDERLY Oh, wots the good of talkin to you? If I wasnt a poor soldier I could punch your ed for forty shillins or a month But because youre my commandin officer you deprive me of my right to a magistrate, and make a compliment of giving me two years ard stead o shootin me Why cant you take your chance the same as any civilian does?

MITCHENER [*rising majestically*] I search the pages of history in vain for a parallel to such a speech made by a private to a General But for the coherence of your remarks I should conclude that you were drunk As it is, you must be mad You shall be placed under restraint at once Call the guard

THE ORDERLY Call your grandmother If you take one man off the doors the place'll be full of Suffragets before you can wink

MITCHENER Then arrest yourself, and off with you to the guard-room

THE ORDERLY What am I to arrest myself for?

MITCHENER Thats nothing to you You have your orders obey them Do you hear? Right about face March

THE ORDERLY How would you feel if you was told to right-about-face and march as if you were a door-mat?

MITCHENER I should feel as if my country had spoken through the voice of my officer I should feel proud and honored to be able to serve my country by obeying its commands No thought of self, no vulgar preoccupation with my own petty vanity, could touch my mind at such a moment To me my officer would not be a mere man he would be for the moment—whatever his personal frailties—the incarnation of our national destiny

THE ORDERLY What I'm saying to you is the voice of old England a jolly sight more than all this rot that you get out of books I'd rather be spoke to by a sergeant than by you He tells me to go to hell when I challenges him to argue it out llike a man It ant polite, but it's English What you say ant anything at all You dont act on it yourself You dont believe in it. Youd punch my

head if I tried it on you, and serve me right. And look here Heres another point for you to argue—

MITCHENER [*with a shriek of protest*] No—

Mrs Banger comes in followed by Lady Corinthia Fanshane Mrs Banger is a masculine woman of forty with a powerful voice and great physical strength Lady Corinthia, who is also over thirty, is beautiful and romantic

MRS BANGER [*throwing the door open decisively and marching straight to Mitchener*] Pray how much longer is the Anti-Suffraget League to be kept waiting? [*She passes him contemptuously and sits down with impressive confidence in the chair next the fireplace Lady Corinthia takes the chair on the opposite side of the table with equal aplomb*]

MITCHENER I'm extremely sorry You really do not know what I have to put up with This imbecile, incompetent, unsoldierly disgrace to the uniform he should never have been allowed to put on ought to have shewn you in fifteen minutes ago

THE ORDERLY All I said was—

MITCHENER Not another word Attention Right about face March [*The Orderly sits down doggedly*] Get out of the room this instant, you fool, or I'll kick you out

THE ORDERLY [*civilly*] I dont mind that, sir It's human It's English Why couldnt you have said it before? [*He goes out*]

MITCHENER Take no notice, I beg these scenes are of daily occurrence now that we have compulsory service under the command of the halfpenny papers Pray sit down

LADY CORINTHIA } [*rising*] { Thank you [*They*
AND MRS BANGER } { *sit down again* }

MITCHENER [*sitting down with a slight chuckle of satisfaction*] And now, ladies, to what am I indebted—

MRS BANGER Let me introduce us I am Rosa Carmina Banger Mrs Banger, organizing secretary of the Anti-Suffraget League This is Lady Corinthia Fanshawe, the president of the League, known in musical circles—I am not musical—as the Richmond Park nightingale A soprano I am myself said to be almost a baritone, but I do not profess to understand these distinctions

MITCHENER [*murmuring politely*] Most happy, I'm sure

MRS BANGER We have come to tell you plainly that the Anti-Suffragets are going to fight

MITCHENER [*gallantly*] Oh, pray leave that

to the men, Mrs Banger

LADY CORINTHIA We can no longer trust the men

MRS BANGER They have shewn neither the strength, the courage, nor the determination which are needed to combat women like the Suffragets.

LADY CORINTHIA Nature is too strong for the combatants

MRS BANGER. Physical struggles between persons of opposite sexes are unseemly.

LADY CORINTHIA Demoralizing

MRS BANGER Insincere

LADY CORINTHIA They are merely embraces in disguise

MRS BANGER. No such suspicion can attach to combats in which the antagonists are of the same sex.

LADY CORINTHIA The Anti-Suffragets have resolved to take the field

MRS BANGER They will enforce the order of General Sandstone for the removal of all women from the two-mile radius—that is, all women except themselves

MITCHENER I am sorry to have to inform you, madam, that the Government has given up that project, and that General Sandstone has resigned in consequence

MRS BANGER That does not concern us in the least We approve of the project and will see that it is carried out We have spent a good deal of money arming ourselves; and we are not going to have that money thrown away through the pusillanimity of a Cabinet of males.

MITCHENER Arming yourselves! But, my dear ladies, under the latest proclamation women are strictly forbidden to carry chains, padlocks, tracts on the franchise, or weapons of any description

LADY CORINTHIA [*producing an ivory-handled revolver and pointing it at his nose*] You little know your countrywomen! General Mitchener

MITCHENER [*without flinching*] Madam it is my duty to take possession of that weapon in accordance with the proclamation Be good enough to put it down

MRS BANGER [*producing an XVIII century horse pistol*] Is it your duty to take possession of this also?

MITCHENER That, madam, is not a weapon it is a curiosity. If you would be kind enough to place it in some museum instead of pointing it at my head, I should be obliged to you.

MRS BANGER. This pistol, sir, was carried at Waterloo by my grandmother

MITCHENER. I presume you mean your grandfather.

MRS BANGER You presume unwarrantably

LADY CORINTHIA. Mrs Banger's grandmother commanded a canteen at that celebrated battle.

MRS. BANGER Who my grandfather was is a point that has never been quite clearly settled. I put my trust, not in my ancestors, but in my good sword, which is at my lodgings

MITCHENER Your sword!

MRS BANGER. The sword with which I slew five Egyptians with my own hand at Kassassin, where I served as a trooper.

MITCHENER Lord bless me! But was your sex never discovered?

MRS BANGER It was never even suspected I had a comrade—a gentleman ranker—whom they called Fanny They never called me Fanny

LADY CORINTHIA. The Suffragets have turned the whole woman movement on to the wrong track They ask for a vote

MRS BANGER What use is a vote? Men have the vote

LADY CORINTHIA And men are slaves

MRS BANGER What women need is the right to military service. Give me a well-mounted regiment of women with sabres, opposed to a regiment of men with votes We shall see which will go down before the other. No we have had enough of these gentle pretty creatures who merely talk and cross-examine ministers in police courts, and go to prison like sheep, and suffer and sacrifice themselves This question must be solved by blood and iron, as was well said by Bismarck, whom I have reason to believe was a woman in disguise

MITCHENER. Bismarck a woman!

MRS BANGER All the really strong men of history have been disguised women.

MITCHENER [*remonstrating*] My dear lady!

MRS BANGER How can you tell? You never knew that the hero of the charge at Kassassin was a woman yet she was it was I, Rosa Carmina Banger. Would Napoleon have been so brutal to women, think you, had he been a man?

MITCHENER Oh, come, come! Really! Surely female rulers have often shewn all the feminine weaknesses Queen Elizabeth, for in-

stance. Her vanity, her levity—

MRS BANGER Nobody who has studied the history of Queen Elizabeth can doubt for a moment that she was a disguised nun

LADY CORINTHIA [*admiring Mrs Banger*] Isn't she splendid!

MRS BANGER [*rising with a large gesture*] This very afternoon I shall cast off this hampering skirt for ever, mount my charger, and with my good sabre lead the Anti-Suffragets to victory [*She strides to the other side of the room, snorting*]

MITCHENER But I can't allow anything of the sort, madam I shall stand no such ridiculous nonsense I'm perfectly determined to put my foot down—

LADY CORINTHIA Don't be hysterical, General

MITCHENER. Hysterical!

MRS BANGER Do you think we are to be stopped by these childish exhibitions of temper? They are useless, and your tears and entreaties—a man's last resource—will avail you just as little I sweep them away, just as I sweep your plans of campaign "made in Germany"—

MITCHENER [*flying into a transport of rage*] How dare you repeat that infamous slander! [*He rings the bell violently*] If this is the alternative to votes for women, I shall advocate giving every woman in the country six votes [*The Orderly comes in*] Remove that woman See that she leaves the building at once

The Orderly forlornly contemplates the iron front presented by Mrs Banger

THE ORDERLY [*propitiatorily*] Would you av the feelin art to step out, madam?

MRS BANGER You are a soldier Obey your orders Put me out. If I got such an order I should not hesitate

THE ORDERLY [*to Mitchener*] Would you mind lendin me a and, Guvner?

LADY CORINTHIA [*raising her revolver*] I shall be obliged to shoot you if you stir, General

MRS BANGER [*to the Orderly*] When you are ordered to put a person out you should do it like this [*She hurls him from the room He is heard falling headlong downstairs and crashing through a glass door*] I shall now wait on General Sandstone If he shews any sign of weakness, he shall share that poor wretch's fate [*She goes out*]

LADY CORINTHIA. Isn't she magnificent

MITCHENER Thank heaven she's gone And now, my dear lady, is it necessary to keep

th it loaded pistol to my nose all through our conversation?

LADY CORINTHIA It's not loaded It's heavy enough, goodness knows, without putting bullets in it

MITCHENER [*triumphantly snatching his revolver from the drawer*] Then I am master of the situation 'This is loaded Ha, ha'

LADY CORINTHIA But since we are not really going to shoot one another, what difference can it possibly make?

MITCHENER [*putting his pistol down on the table*] True Quite true I recognize there the practical good sense that has prevented you from falling into the snares of the Suffragets.

LADY CORINTHIA The Suffragets, General, are the dupes of doddies A really attractive and clever woman—

MITCHENER [*gallantly*] Yourself, for instance

LADY CORINTHIA [*snatching up his revolver*] Another step and you are a dead man.

MITCHENER [*amazed*] My dear lady!

LADY CORINTHIA I am not your dear lady You are not the first man who has concluded that because I am devoted to music and can reach F in alt with the greatest facility—Patti never got above E flat—I am marked out as the prey of every libertine. You think I am like the thousands of weak women whom you have ruined—

MITCHENER I solemnly protest—

LADY CORINTHIA Oh, I know what you officers are To you a woman's honor is nothing, and the idle pleasure of the moment is everything

MITCHENER This is perfectly ridiculous I never ruined anyone in my life

LADY CORINTHIA. Never! Are you in earnest?

MITCHENER Certainly I am in earnest Most indignantly in earnest

LADY CORINTHIA [*throwing down the pistol contemptuously*] Then you have no temperament you are an artist You have no soul for music

MITCHENER I've subscribed to the regimental band all my life I bought two sarusophones for it out of my own pocket When I sang Tosti's Goodbye for Ever at Knightsbridge in 1880 the whole regiment wept. You are too young to remember that.

LADY CORINTHIA Your advances are useless I—

MITCHENER Confound it, madam, can you not receive an innocent compliment without

suspecting me of dishonorable intentions?

LADY CORINTHIA. Love—real love—makes all intentions honorable. But you could never understand that

MITCHENER. I'll not submit to the vulgar penny-novelette notion that an officer is less honorable than a civilian in his relations with women. While I live I'll raise my voice—

LADY CORINTHIA. Tush!

MITCHENER. What do you mean by tush?

LADY CORINTHIA. You cant raise your voice above its natural compass. What sort of voice have you?

MITCHENER. A tenor. What sort had you?

LADY CORINTHIA. Had! I have it still. I tell you I am the highest living soprano. [*Scornfully*] What was your highest note, pray?

MITCHENER. B flat—once—in 1879. I was drunk at the time.

LADY CORINTHIA [*gazing at him almost tenderly*]. Though you may not believe me, I find you are more interesting when you talk about music than when you are endeavoring to betray a woman who has trusted you by remaining alone with you in your apartment.

MITCHENER [*springing up and fuming away to the fireplace*]. Those repeated insults to a man of blameless life are as disgraceful to you as they are undeserved by me, Lady Corinthia. Such suspicions invite the conduct they impute. [*She raises the pistol*]. You need not be alarmed. I am only going to leave the room.

LADY CORINTHIA. Fish.

MITCHENER. Fish! This is worse than tush. Why fish?

LADY CORINTHIA. Yes, fish. cold-blooded fish.

MITCHENER. Dash it all, madam, do you want me to make advances to you?

LADY CORINTHIA. I have not the slightest intention of yielding to them; but to make them would be a tribute to romance. What is life without romance?

MITCHENER [*making a movement towards her*]. I tell you—

LADY CORINTHIA. Stop. No nearer. No vulgar sensuousness. If you must adore, adore at a distance.

MITCHENER. This is worse than Mrs Banger. I shall ask that estimable woman to come back.

LADY CORINTHIA. Poor Mrs Banger! Do not for a moment suppose, General Mitchener,

that Mrs Banger represents my views on the suffrage question. Mrs Banger is a man in petticoats. I am every inch a woman; but I find it convenient to work with her.

MITCHENER. Do you find the combination comfortable?

LADY CORINTHIA. I do not wear combinations, General [*with dignity*]. They are unwomanly.

MITCHENER [*throwing himself despairingly into the chair next the hearthrug*]. I shall go mad. I never for a moment dreamt of alluding to anything of the sort.

LADY CORINTHIA. There is no need to blush and become self-conscious at the mention of underclothing. You are extremely vulgar, General.

MITCHENER. Lady Corinthia: you have my pistol. Will you have the goodness to blow my brains out? I should prefer it to any other effort to follow the gyrations of the weathercock. You no doubt call your mind. If you refuse, then I warn you that you'll not get another word out of me—not if we sit here until doomsday.

LADY CORINTHIA. I don't want you to talk. I want you to listen. You do not understand my views on the question of the suffrage. [*She rises to make a speech*]. I must preface my remarks by reminding you that the Suffraget movement is essentially a dowdy movement. The Suffragets are not alldowdies; but they are mainly supported by dowdies. Now I am not a dowdy. Oh, no compliments—

MITCHENER. I did not utter a sound.

LADY CORINTHIA [*smiling*]. It is easy to read your thoughts. I am one of those women who are accustomed to rule the world through men. Man is ruled by beauty, by charm. The men who are not have no influence. The Salic Law, which forbade women to occupy a throne, is founded on the fact that when a woman is on the throne the country is ruled by men, and therefore ruled badly, whereas when a man is on the throne the country is ruled by women, and therefore ruled well. The Suffragets would degrade women from being rulers to being voters, mere politicians, the drudges of the caucus and the polling booth. We should lose our influence completely under such a state of affairs. The New Zealand women have the vote. What is the result? No poet ever makes a New Zealand woman his heroine. One might as well be romantic about New Zealand mutton. Look

at the Suffragets themselves The only ones who are popular are the pretty ones, who flirt with mobs as ordinary women flirt with officers

MITCHENER Then I understand you to hold that the country should be governed by the women after all

LADY CORINTHIA Not by all the women By certain women I had almost said by one woman By the women who have charm—who have artistic talent—who wield a legitimate, a refining influence over the men [*She sits down gracefully, smiling, and arranging her draperies with conscious elegance*]

MITCHENER In short, madam, you think that if you give the vote to the man, you give the power to the woman who can get round the man

LADY CORINTHIA That is not a very delicate way of putting it, but I suppose that is how you would express what I mean

MITCHENER Perhaps you've never had any experience of garrison life If you had, you'd have noticed that the sort of woman who's clever at getting round men is sometimes rather a bad lot

LADY CORINTHIA What do you mean by a bad lot?

MITCHENER I mean a woman who would play the very devil if the other women didn't keep her in pretty strict order I don't approve of democracy, because it's rot, and I'm against giving the vote to women, because I'm not accustomed to it, and therefore am able to see with an unprejudiced eye what infernal nonsense it is But I tell you plainly, Lady Corinthia, that there is one game that I dislike more than either democracy or votes for women, and that is the game of Antony and Cleopatra If I must be ruled by women, let me have decent women, and not—well, not the other sort

LADY CORINTHIA You have a coarse mind, General Mitchener

MITCHENER So has Mrs Banger And, by George! I prefer Mrs Banger to you!

LADY CORINTHIA [*bounding to her feet*] You prefer Mrs Banger to me!!

MITCHENER I do You said yourself she was splendid

LADY CORINTHIA You are no true man You are one of those unsexed creatures who have no joy in life, no sense of beauty, no high notes

MITCHENER. No doubt I am, madam As a

matter of fact, I am not clever at discussing public questions, because, as an English gentleman, I was not brought up to use my brains But occasionally, after a number of remarks which are perhaps sometimes rather idiotic, I get certain convictions Thanks to you, I have now got a conviction that this woman question is not a question of lovely and accomplished females, but of dowdies The average Englishwoman is a dowdy and never has half a chance of becoming anything else She hasn't any charm, and she has no high notes, except when she's giving her husband a piece of her mind, or calling down the street for one of the children

LADY CORINTHIA How disgusting!

MITCHENER Somebody must do the dowdy work! If we had to choose between pitching all the dowdies into the Thames and pitching all the lovely and accomplished women, the lovely ones would have to go

LADY CORINTHIA And if you had to do without Wagner's music or do without your breakfast, you would do without Wagner Pray does that make eggs and bacon more precious than music, or the butcher and baker better than the poet and philosopher? The scullery may be more necessary to our bare existence than the cathedral Even humbler apartments might make the same claim But which is the more essential to the higher life?

MITCHENER Your arguments are so devilishly ingenious that I feel convinced you got them out of some confounded book Mine—such as they are—are my own I imagine it's something like this There is an old saying that if you take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves Well, perhaps if we take care of the dowdies and the butchers and the bakers, the beauties and the bigwigs will take care of themselves [*Rising and facing her determinedly*] Anyhow, I don't want to have things arranged for me by Wagner I'm not Wagner How does he know where the shoe pinches me? How do you know where the shoe pinches your washerwoman? you and your high F in alt! How are you to know when you haven't made her comfortable unless she has a vote? Do you want her to come and break your windows?

LADY CORINTHIA Am I to understand that General Mitchener is a Democrat and a Suffraget?

MITCHENER Yes: you have converted me—

you and Mrs Banger

LADY CORINTHIA. Farewell, creature [*Balsquith enters hurriedly*] Mr Balsquith. I am going to wait on General Sandstone. He, at least, is an officer and a gentleman [*She sails out*]

BALSQUITH Mitchener. the game is up

MITCHENER What do you mean?

BALSQUITH The strain is too much for the Cabinet. The old Liberal and Unionist Free Traders declare that if they are defeated on their resolution to invite tenders from private contractors for carrying on the Army and Navy, they will go solid for votes for women as the only means of restoring the liberties of the country which we have destroyed by compulsory military service

MITCHENER Infernal impudence!

BALSQUITH The Labor Party is taking the same line. They say the men got the Factory Acts by hiding behind the women's petticoats, and that they will get votes for the army in the same way.

MITCHENER Balsquith we must not yield to clamor. I have just told that woman that I am at last convinced—

BALSQUITH [*joyfully*]—that the Suffragets must be supported?

MITCHENER No. that the Anti-Suffragets must be put down at all hazards.

BALSQUITH Same thing.

MITCHENER No. For you now tell me that the Labor Party demands votes for women. That makes it impossible to give them, because it would be yielding to clamor. The one condition on which we can consent to grant anything in this country is that nobody shall presume to ask for it.

BALSQUITH [*earnestly*] Mitchener it's no use. You can't have the conveniences of Democracy without its occasional inconveniences.

MITCHENER What are its conveniences, I should like to know?

BALSQUITH Well, when you tell people that they are the real rulers and they can do what they like, nine times out of ten they say "All right tell us what to do." But it happens sometimes that they get an idea of their own; and then of course you're landed.

MITCHENER. Sh—

BALSQUITH [*desperately shouting him down*] No it's no use telling me to shoot them down. I'm not going to do it. After all, I don't suppose votes for women will make much differ-

ence. It hasn't in the other countries in which it has been tried.

MITCHENER I never supposed it would make any difference. What I can't stand is giving in to that Pankhurst lot. Hang it all, Balsquith, it seems only yesterday that we put them in quad for a month. I said at the time that it ought to have been ten years. If my advice had been taken this wouldn't have happened. It's a consolation to me that events are proving how thoroughly right I was.

The Orderly rushes in

THE ORDERLY Look 'ere, sir. Mrs Banger's locked the door of General Sandstone's room on the inside, an' she's sittin on his ed til he signs a proclamation for women to serve in the army.

MITCHENER Put your shoulder to the door and burst it open.

THE ORDERLY It's only in story books that doors burst open as easy as that. Besides, I'm only too thankful to av a locked door between me and Mrs B., and so is all the rest of us.

MITCHENER Cowards. Balsquith. to the rescue! [*He dashes out*]

BALSQUITH [*ambling calmly to the hearth*] This is the business of the Serjeant-at-Arms rather than of the leader of the House. There's no use in my tackling Mrs Banger. she would only sit on my head too.

THE ORDERLY. You take my tip, Mr Balsquith. Give the women the vote and give the army civil rights; and av done with it.

Mitchener returns and comes between them

MITCHENER Balsquith. prepare to hear the worst.

BALSQUITH Sandstone is no more?

MITCHENER On the contrary, he is particularly lively. He has softened Mrs Banger by a proposal of marriage in which he appears to be perfectly in earnest. He says he has met his ideal at last, a really soldierly woman. She will sit on his head for the rest of his life, and the British Army is now to all intents and purposes commanded by Mrs Banger. When I remonstrated with Sandstone she positively shouted "Right about face March" at me in the most offensive tone. If she hadn't been a woman I should have punched her head. I precious nearly punched Sandstone's. The horrors of martial law administered by Mrs Banger are too terrible to be faced. I demand civil rights for the army.

THE ORDERLY [*chuckling*] Wot oh, General! Wot oh!

MITCHENER Hold your tongue [*He goes to the door and calls*] Mrs Farrell! [*He returns, and again addresses the Orderly*] Civil rights dont mean the right to be uncivil [*Pleased with his own wit*] Almost a pun Ha ha!

MRS FARRELL [*entering*] Whats the matter now? [*She comes to the table*]

MITCHENER [*to the Orderly*] I have private business with Mrs Farrell Outside, you infernal blackguard

THE ORDERLY [*arguing, as usual*] Well, I didntask to— [*Mitchener seizes him by the nape, marches him out, slams the door, and comes solemnly to Mrs Farrell*]

MITCHENER Excuse the abruptness of this communication, Mrs Farrell, but I know only one woman in the country whose practical ability and force of character can maintain her husband in competition with the husband of Mrs Banger I have the honor to propose for your hand

MRS FARRELL D'yemean you want to marry me?

MITCHENER I do

MRS FARRELL. No thank you I'd have to work for you just the same, only I shouldnt get any wages for it

BALSQUITH That will be remedied when women get the vote Ive had to promise that.

MITCHENER [*winningly*] Mrs Farrell you have been charwoman here now ever since I took up my duties Have you really never, in your more romantic moments, cast a favorable eye on my person?

MRS FARRELL. Ive been too busy casting an unfavorable eye on your cloze an on the litter you make with your papers

MITCHENER [*wounded*] Am I to understand that you refuse me?

MRS FARRELL. Just wait a bit [*She takes Mitchener's chair and rings up the telephone*] Double three oh seven Elephant

MITCHENER I trust youre not ringing for the police, Mrs Farrell. I assure you I'm perfectly sane

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] Is that you, Eliza? [*She listens for the answer*] Not out o bed yet! Go and pull her out be the heels, the lazy sthreel, and tell her her mother wants to speak to her very particularly about General Mitchener [*To Mitchener*] Dont you be afeard I know youre sane enough when youre not talkin about the Germans [*Into*

the telephone] Is that you, Eliza? [*She listens for the answer*] D'ye remember me givin you a clout on the side of the head for tellin me that if I only knew how to play me cards I could marry any General on the staff instead o disgracin you be bein a charwoman? [*She listens for the answer*] Well, I can have General Mitchener without playin any cards at all What d'ye think I ought to say? [*She listens*] Well, I'm no chicken meself [*To Mitchener*] How old are you?

MITCHENER [*with an effort*] Fifty-two

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] He says he's fifty-two [*She listens, then, to Mitchener*] She says youre down in Who's Who as sixty-one

MITCHENER Damn Who's Who!

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] Anyhow I wouldnt let that stand in the way [*She listens*] If I really wha t? [*She listens*] I cant hear you If I really wha t? [*She listens*] Who druv him? I never said a word to— Eh? [*She listens*] Oh, love him Arra, dont be a fool, child [*To Mitchener*] She wants to know do I really love you [*Into the telephone*] It's likely indeed I'd frighten the man off with any such nonsense at my age What? [*She listens*] Well, thats just what I was thinkin

MITCHENER. May I ask what you were thinking, Mrs Farrell? This suspense is awful

MRS FARRELL. I was thinkin that praps the Duchess might like her daughtther-in-law's mother to be a General's lady betther than to be a charwoman [*Into the telephone*] Waitle youre married yourself, me fine lady youll find out that every woman's a charwoman from the day she's married [*She listens*] Then you think I might take him? [*She listens*] G'lang, you young scald if I had you here I'd teach you manners [*She listens*] Thats enough now Back wid you to bed, and be thankful I'm not there to put me slipper across you [*She rings off*] The impudence! [*To Mitchener*] Bless you, me chuldher, may you be happy, she says [*To Balsquith, going to his side of the room*] Give dear old Mitch me love, she says

The Orderly opens the door, ushering in Lady Cornitha

THE ORDERLY Lady Cornitha Fanshawe to speak to you, sir

LADY CORINTHIA General Mitchener your designs on Mrs Banger are defeated She is engaged to General Sandstone Do you still prefer her to me?

MRS FARRELL He's out o the hunt He's engaged to me

The Orderly, overcome by this news, reels from the door to the standing desk and clutches the stool to save himself from collapsing

MITCHENER And extremely proud of it, Lady Corinthia.

LADY CORINTHIA [*contemptuously*] She suits you exactly [*Coming to Balsquith*] Mr Balsquith: you, at least, are not a Philistine

BALSQUITH No, Lady Corinthia, but I'm a confirmed bachelor. I dont want a wife, but I want an Egeria

MRS FARRELL More shame for you!

LADY CORINTHIA Silence, woman The position and functions of a wife may suit your gross nature An Egeria is exactly what I desire to be. [*To Balsquith*] Can you play accompaniments?

BALSQUITH Melodies only, I regret to say With one finger But my brother, who is a very obliging fellow, and not unlike me personally, is acquainted with three chords, with which he manages to accompany most of the comic songs of the day

LADY CORINTHIA. I do not sing comic songs Neither will you when I am your Egeria You must come to my musical at-home this afternoon I will allow you to sit at my feet

BALSQUITH [*doing so*] That is my ideal of romantic happiness It commits me exactly as far as I desire to venture Thank you.

THE ORDERLY. Wot price me, General? Wont you celebrate your engagement by doin somethin for me? Maynt I be promoted to be a sergeant?

MITCHENER Youre too utterly incompetent to discharge the duties of a sergeant You

are only fit to be a lieutenant I shall recommend you for a commission

THE ORDERLY Hooray! The Parkinsons o Stepney'll be proud to have me call on em now I'll go and tell the sergeant what I think of him. Hooray! [*He rushes out*]

MRS FARRELL [*going to the door and calling after him*] You might have the manners to shut the door afther you [*She shuts it and comes between Mitchener and Lady Corinthia*].

MITCHENER Poor wretch! the day after civil rights are conceded to the army he and Chubbs-Jenkinson will be found incapable of maintaining discipline They will be sacked and replaced by really capable men Mrs Farrell as we are engaged, and I am anxious to do the correct thing in every way, I am quite willing to kiss you if you wish it

MRS FARRELL Youd only feel like a fool, and so would I

MITCHENER You are really the most sensible woman Ive made an extremely wise choice [*He kisses her hand*]

LADY CORINTHIA [*to Balsquith*] You may kiss my hand, if you wish

BALSQUITH [*cautiously*] I think we had better not commit ourselves too far Let us change a subject which threatens to become embarrassing [*To Mitchener*] The moral of the occasion for you, Mitchener, appears to be that youve got to give up treating soldiers as if they were schoolboys

MITCHENER The moral for you, Balsquith, is that youve got to give up treating women as if they were angels Ha ha!

MRS FARRELL It's a mercy youve found one another out at last Thats enough now.

THE END

XXXVI

THE GLIMPSE OF REALITY

A TRAGEDIETTA

In the fifteenth century A D Gloaming An inn on the edge of an Italian lake A stone cross with a pedestal of steps. A very old friar sitting on the steps The angelus rings The friar prays and crosses himself A girl ferries a boat to the shore and comes up the bank to the cross

THE GIRL Father were you sent here by a boy from—

THE FRIAR [*in a high, piping, but clear voice*]

I'm a very old man Oh, very old Old enough to be your great grandfather, my daughter. Oh, very very old

THE GIRL. But were you sent here by a boy from—

THE FRIAR Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes Quite a boy, he was Very young And I'm very old Oh, very very old, dear daughter.

THE GIRL Are you a holy man?

THE FRIAR [*ecstatically*] Oh, very holy
Very, very, very, very holy

THE GIRL But have you your wits still
about you, father? Can you absolve me from
a great sin?

THE FRIAR Oh yes, yes, yes A very great
sin I'm very old, but I've my wits about me
I'm one hundred and thirteen years old, by
the grace of Our Lady, but I still remember
all my Latin, and I can bind and loose, and
I'm very very wise, for I'm old and have left
far behind me the world, the flesh, and the
devil. You see I am blind, daughter, but
when a boy told me that there was a duty
for me to do here, I came without a guide,
straight to this spot, led by St Barbara. She
led me to this stone, daughter It's a com-
fortable stone to me she has blessed it for me

THE GIRL It's a cross, father

THE FRIAR [*pipng rapturously*] Oh blessed,
blessed, ever blessed be my holy patroness
for leading me to this sacred spot Is there
any building near this, daughter? The boy
mentioned an inn

THE GIRL There is an inn, father, not
twenty yards away It's kept by my father,
Squarcio

THE FRIAR And is there a barn where a
very very old man may sleep and have a
handful of peas for his supper?

THE GIRL There is bed and board both for
holy men who will take the guilt of our sins
from us Swear to me on the cross that you
are a very holy man

THE FRIAR I'll do better than that,
daughter I'll prove my holiness to you by a
miracle

THE GIRL A miracle!

THE FRIAR A most miraculous miracle A
wonderful miracle! When I was only eighteen
years of age I was already famous for my
devoutness When the hand of the blessed
Saint Barbara, which was chopped off in the
days when the church was persecuted, was
found at Viterbo, I was selected by the Pope
himself to carry it to Rome for that blessed
lady's festival there, and since that my hand
has never grown old It remains young and
warm and plump whilst the rest of my body
is withered almost to dust, and my voice is
cracked and become the whistling you now
hear

THE GIRL Is that true? Let me see [*He
takes her hand in his She kneels and kisses it
fervently*] Oh, it's true You are a saint.

Heaven has sent you in answer to my prayer

THE FRIAR As soft as your neck, is it not?
[*He caresses her neck*]

THE GIRL It thrills me it is wonderful

THE FRIAR It thrills me also, daughter
That, too, is a miracle at my age

THE GIRL Father—

THE FRIAR Come closer, daughter I'm
very very old and very very very deaf you
must speak quite close to my ear if you speak
low [*She kneels with her breast against his arm
and her chin on his shoulder*] Good Good
That's better Oh, I'm very very old

THE GIRL Father I am about to commit a
deadly sin

THE FRIAR Do, my daughter Do, do, do,
do, do

THE GIRL [*discouraged*] Oh, you do not hear
what I say

THE FRIAR Not hear! Then come closer,
daughter Oh, much, much closer Put your
arm round my shoulders, and speak in my
ear Do not be ashamed, my daughter I'm
only a sack of old bones You can hear them
rattle [*He shakes his shoulders and makes the
beads of his rosary rattle at the same time*]
Listen to the old man's bones rattling Oh,
take the old old man to heaven, Blessed
Barbara.

THE GIRL Your wits are wandering Listen
to me Are you listening?

THE FRIAR Yes yes yes yes yes yes
Remember whether I hear or not, I can
absolve All the better for you perhaps if I
do not hear the worst. He! He! He! Well
well When my wits wander, squeeze my
young hand, and the blessed Barbara will
restore my faculties [*She squeezes his hand
vigorously*] That's right Tha-a-a-a-ats right
Now I remember what I am and who you
are Proceed, my child

THE GIRL Father, I am to be married this
year to a young fisherman

THE FRIAR The devil you are, my dear

THE GIRL [*squeezing his hand*] Oh listen,
listen, you are wandering again

THE FRIAR That's right hold my hand
tightly I understand, I understand This
young fisherman is neither very beautiful
nor very brave, but he is honest and devoted
to you, and there is something about him
different to all the other young men

THE GIRL You know him, then!

THE FRIAR No no no no no I'm too old to
remember people But Saint Barbara tells

me everything

THE GIRL Then you know why we cant marry yet.

THE FRIAR He is too poor His mother will not let him unless his bride has a dowry—

THE GIRL [*interrupting him impetuously*] Yes, yes—oh blessed be Saint Barbara for sending you to me! Thirty crowns—thirty crowns from a poor girl like me it is wicked—monstrous I must sin to earn it

THE FRIAR. That will not be your sin, but his mother's

THE GIRL Oh, that is true. I never thought of that But will she suffer for it?

THE FRIAR Thousands of years in purgatory for it, my daughter. The worse the sin, the longer she will suffer So let her have it as hot as possible [*The girl recoils*] Do not let go my hand I'm wandering [*She squeezes his hand*] That's right, darling Sin is a very wicked thing, my daughter Even a mother-in-law's sin is very expensive, for your husband would stint you to pay for masses for her soul.

THE GIRL That is true. You are very wise, father

THE FRIAR Let it be a venial sin. an amiable sin. What sin were you thinking of, for instance?

THE GIRL There is a young Count Ferruccio [*the Friar starts at the name*], son of the tyrant of Parma—

THE FRIAR An excellent young man, daughter You could not sin with a more excellent young man. But thirty crowns is too much to ask from him. He cant afford it He is a beggar. an outcast He made love to Madonna Bigita, the sister of Cardinal Poldi, a Cardinal eighteen years of age, a nephew of the Holy Father The Cardinal surprised Ferruccio with his sister, and Ferruccio's temper got the better of him He threw that holy young Cardinal out of the window and broke his arm

THE GIRL You know everything

THE FRIAR Saint Barbara, my daughter, Saint Barbara I know nothing But where have you seen Ferruccio? Saint Barbara says that he never saw you in his life, and has not thirty crowns in the world

THE GIRL Oh, why does not Saint Barbara tell you that I am an honest girl who would not sell herself for a thousand crowns

THE FRIAR Do not give way to pride, daughter. Pride is one of the seven deadly

sins.

THE GIRL. I know that, father, and believe me, I'm humble and good I swear to you by Our Lady that it is not Ferruccio's love that I must take, but his life. [*The Friar, startled, turns powerfully on her*] Do not be angry, dear father do not cast me off. What is a poor girl to do? We are very poor, my father and I. And I am not to kill him I am only to decoy him here, for he is a devil for women; and once he is in the inn, my father will do the rest

THE FRIAR [*in a rich baritone voice*] Will he, by thunder and lightning and the flood and all the saints, will he? [*He flings off his gown and beard, revealing himself as a handsome youth, a nobleman by his dress, as he springs up and rushes to the door of the inn, which he batters with a stone*] Ho there, Squarcio, rascal, assassin, son of a pig come out that I may break every bone in your carcass

THE GIRL You are a young man!

THE FRIAR. Another miracle of Saint Barbara. [*Kicking the door*] Come out, whelp. come out, rat Come out and be killed Come out and be beaten to a jelly. Come out, dog, swine, animal, mangy hound, lousy— [*Squarcio comes out, sword in hand*] Do you know who I am, dog?

SQUARCIO [*impressed*] No, your Excellency

THE FRIAR. I am Ferruccio, Count Ferruccio, the man you are to kill, the man your devil of a daughter is to decoy, the man who is now going to cut you into forty thousand pieces and throw you into the lake

SQUARCIO. Keep your temper, Signor Count

FERRUCCIO. I'll not keep my temper I've an uncontrollable temper I get blinding splitting headaches if I do not relieve my temper by acts of violence I'll relieve it now by pounding you to jelly, assassin that you are

SQUARCIO [*shrugging his shoulders*] As you please, Signor Count I may as well earn my money now as another time [*He handles his sword*].

FERRUCCIO. Ass—do you suppose I have trusted myself in this territory without precautions? My father has made a wager with your feudal lord here about me

SQUARCIO What wager, may it please your Excellency?

FERRUCCIO. What wager, blockhead! Why, that if I am assassinated, the murderer will not be brought to justice.

SQUARCIO. So that if I kill you—

FERRUCCIO Your Baron will lose ten crowns unless you are broken on the wheel for it

SQUARCIO Only ten crowns, Excellency! Your father does not value your life very highly

FERRUCCIO Dolt. Can you not reason? If the sum were larger your Baron would win it by killing me himself and breaking somebody else on the wheel for it you, most likely Ten crowns is just enough to make him break you on the wheel if you kill me, but not enough to pay for all the masses that would have to be said for him if the guilt were his

SQUARCIO That is very clever, Excellency [*Sheathing his sword*] You shall not be slain I will take care of that If anything happens, it will be an accident

FERRUCCIO Body of Bacchus! I forgot that trick. I should have killed you when my blood was hot

SQUARCIO Will your Excellency please to step in? My best room and my best cooking are at your Excellency's disposal

FERRUCCIO To the devil with your mangy kennel! You want to tell every traveller that Count Ferruccio slept in your best bed and was eaten by your army of fleas Take yourself out of my sight when you have told me where the next inn is

SQUARCIO I'm sorry to thwart your Excellency, but I have not forgotten your father's wager, and until you leave this territory I shall stick to you like your shadow

FERRUCCIO And why, pray?

SQUARCIO Someone else might kill your Excellency, and, as you say, my illustrious Baron might break me on the wheel for your father's ten crowns I must protect your Excellency, whether your Excellency is willing or not

FERRUCCIO If you dare to annoy me, I'll handle your bones so that there will be nothing left for the hangman to break. Now what do you say?

SQUARCIO I say that your Excellency overrates your Excellency's strength You would have no more chance against me than a grasshopper [*Ferruccio makes a demonstration*] Oh, I know that your Excellency has been taught by fencers and wrestlers and the like, but I can take all you can give me without turning a hair, and settle the account when you are out of breath That is why

common men are dangerous, your Excellency they are inured to toil and endurance Besides, I know all the tricks

THE GIRL Do not attempt to quarrel with my father, Count It must be as he says It is his profession to kill What could you do against him? If you want to beat somebody, you must beat me [*She goes into the inn*]

SQUARCIO I advise you not to try that, Excellency She also is very strong

FERRUCCIO Then I shall have a headache that's all [*He throws himself ill-humoredly on a bench at the table outside the inn Giulia returns with a tablecloth and begins preparing the table for a meal*]

SQUARCIO A good supper, Excellency, will prevent that And Giulia will sing for you

FERRUCCIO Not while there's a broomstick in the house to break her ugly head with. Do you suppose I'm going to listen to the howling of a she-wolf who wanted me to absolve her for getting me killed?

SQUARCIO The poor must live as well as the rich, sir Giulia is a good girl [*He goes into the inn*]

FERRUCCIO [*shouting after him*] Must the rich die that the poor may live?

GIULIA The poor often die that the rich may live

FERRUCCIO What an honor for them! But it would have been no honor for me to die merely that you might marry your clod of a fisherman

GIULIA You are spiteful, Signor

FERRUCCIO I am no troubadour, Giulia, if that is what you mean

GIULIA How did you know about my Sandro and his mother? How were you so wise when you pretended to be an old friar? you that are so childish now that you are yourself!

FERRUCCIO I take it that either Saint Barbara inspired me, or else that you are a great fool

GIULIA Saint Barbara will surely punish you for that wicked lie you told about her hand

FERRUCCIO The hand that thrilled you?

GIULIA That was blasphemy You should not have done it. You made me feel as if I had had a taste of heaven, and then you poisoned it in my heart as a taste of hell That was wicked and cruel You nobles are cruel

FERRUCCIO Well! do you expect us to nurse your babies for you? Our work is to rule and

to fight Ruling is nothing but inflicting cruelties on wrongdoers: fighting is nothing but being cruel to one's enemies You poor people leave us all the cruel work, and then wonder that we are cruel Where would you be if we left it undone? Outside the life I lead all to myself—the life of thought and poetry—I know only two pleasures cruelty and lust I desire revenge I desire women And both of them disappoint me when I get them

GIULIA It would have been a good deed to kill you, I think.

FERRUCCIO Killing is always sport, my Giulietta

SANDRO'S VOICE [*on the lake*] Giulietta! Giulietta!

FERRUCCIO [*calling to him*] Stop that noise Your Giulietta is here with a young nobleman Come up and amuse him [*To Giulietta*] What will you give me if I tempt him to defy his mother and marry you without a dowry?

GIULIA You are tempting me A poor girl can give no more than she has I should think you were a devil if you were not a noble, which is worse [*She goes out to meet Sandro*]

FERRUCCIO [*calling after her*] The devil does evil for pure love of it he does not ask a price: he offers it [*Squarcio returns*] Prepare supper for four, bandit

SQUARCIO Is your appetite so great in this heat, Signor?

FERRUCCIO There will be four to supper You, I, your daughter, and Sandro. Do not stint yourselves I pay for all Go and prepare more food

SQUARCIO Your order is already obeyed, Excellency

FERRUCCIO How?

SQUARCIO I prepared for four, having you here to pay. The only difference your graciousness makes is that we shall have the honor to eat with you instead of after you.

FERRUCCIO Dog of a bandit! you should have been born a nobleman

SQUARCIO I was born noble, Signor, but as we had no money to maintain our pretensions, I dropped them [*He goes back into the inn*]

Giulia returns with Sandro

GIULIA This is the lad, Excellency Sandro this is his lordship Count Ferruccio

SANDRO At your lordship's service

FERRUCCIO. Sit down, Sandro, You, Giulia, and Squarcio are my guests [*They sit*]

GIULIA. I've told Sandro everything, Ex-

cency.

FERRUCCIO And what does Sandro say? [*Squarcio returns with a tray*]

GIULIA He says that if you have ten crowns in your purse, and we kill you, we can give them to the Baron. It would be the same to him as if he got it from your illustrious father.

SQUARCIO Stupid! the Count is cleverer than you think No matter how much money you give the Baron he can always get ten crowns more by breaking me on the wheel if the Count is killed

GIULIA That is true. Sandro did not think of that

SANDRO [*with cheerful politeness*] Oh! what a head I have! I am not clever, Excellency At the same time you must know that I did not mean my Giulietta to tell you I know my duty to your Excellency better than that.

FERRUCCIO Come! You are dear people: charming people Let us get to work at the supper You shall be the mother of the family and give us our portions, Giulietta [*They take their places*] That's right Serve me last, Giulietta Sandro is hungry

SQUARCIO [*to the girl*] Come come! do you not see that his Excellency will touch nothing until we have had some first [*He eats*] See, Excellency! I have tasted everything To tell you the truth, poisoning is an art I do not understand

FERRUCCIO. Very few professional poisoners do, Squarcio. One of the best professionals in Rome poisoned my uncle and aunt They are alive still The poison cured my uncle's gout, and only made my aunt thin, which was exactly what she desired, poor lady, as she was losing her figure terribly

SQUARCIO. There is nothing like the sword, Excellency

SANDRO Except the water, Father Squarcio Trust a fisherman to know that. Nobody can tell that drowning was not an accident.

FERRUCCIO What does Giulietta say?

GIULIA I should not kill a man if I hated him You cannot torment a man when he is dead Men kill because they think it is what they call a satisfaction But that is only fancy

FERRUCCIO And if you loved him? Would you kill him then?

GIULIA. Perhaps If you love a man you are his slave: everything he says—everything he does—is a stab to your heart. every day is a long dread of losing him Better kill him if there be no other escape

FERRUCCIO How well you have brought up your family, Squarcio! Some more omelette, Sandro?

SANDRO [*very cheerfully*] I thank your Excellency [*He accepts and eats with an appetite*]

FERRUCCIO I pledge you all To the sword and the fisherman's net to love and hate! [*He drinks they drink with him*]

SQUARCIO To the sword!

SANDRO To the net, Excellency, with thanks for the honor

GIULIA To love, Signor

FERRUCCIO To hate the noble's portion!

SQUARCIO The meal has done you good, Excellency How do you feel now?

FERRUCCIO I feel that there is nothing but a bait of ten crowns between me and death, Squarcio

SQUARCIO It is enough, Excellency And enough is always enough

SANDRO Do not think of that, Excellency It is only that we are poor folk, and have to consider how to make both ends meet as one may say [*Looking at the dish*] Excellency—?

FERRUCCIO Finish it, Sandro I've done

SANDRO Father Squarcio?

SQUARCIO Finish it, finish it

SANDRO Giulietta?

GIULIA [*surprised*] Me? Oh no Finish it, Sandro it will only go to the pig

SANDRO Then, with your Excellency's permission—[*he helps himself*]

SQUARCIO Sing for his Excellency, my daughter

Giulia turns to the door to fetch her mandoline

FERRUCCIO I shall jump into the lake, Squarcio, if your cat begins to miaow!

SANDRO [*always cheerful and reassuring*] No, no, Excellency Giulietta sings very sweetly have no fear

FERRUCCIO I do not care for singing at least not the singing of peasants There is only one thing for which one woman will do as well as another, and that is lovemaking Come, Father Squarcio I will buy Giulietta from you you can have her back for nothing when I am tired of her How much?

SQUARCIO In ready money, or in promises?

FERRUCCIO Old for Ready money

SQUARCIO Fifty crowns, Excellency

FERRUCCIO Fifty crowns! Fifty crowns for that blackfaced devil! I would not give fifty crowns for one of my mother's ladies-in-waiting Fifty pence, you must mean.

SQUARCIO Doubtless your Excellency, being

a younger son, is poor Shall we say five and twenty crowns?

FERRUCCIO I tell you she is not worth five

SQUARCIO Oh, if you come to what she is worth, Excellency, what are any of us worth? I take it that you are a gentleman, not a merchant

GIULIA What are you worth, Signorino?

FERRUCCIO I am accustomed to be asked for favors, Giulietta, not to be asked impertinent questions

GIULIA What would you do if a strong man took you by the scruff of your neck, or his daughter thrust a knife in your throat, Signor?

FERRUCCIO It would be many a year, my gentle Giulietta, before any baseborn man or woman would dare threaten a nobleman again The whole village would be flayed alive

SANDRO Oh no, Signor These things often have a great air of being accidents And the great families are well content that they should appear so It is such a great trouble to flay a whole village alive Here by the water, accidents are so common

SQUARCIO We of the nobility, Signor, are not strict enough I learnt that when I took to breeding horses The horses you breed from thoroughbreds are not all worth the trouble most of them are screws Well, the horsebreeder gets rid of his screws for what they will fetch they go to labor like any peasant's beast But our nobility does not study its business so carefully If you are a screw, and the son of a baron, you are brought up to think yourself a little god, though you are nothing, and cannot rule yourself, much less a province And you presume, and presume, and presume—

GIULIA And insult, and insult, and insult

SQUARCIO Until one day you find yourself in a strange place with nothing to help you but your own hands and your own wits—

GIULIA And you perish—

SANDRO Accidentally—

GIULIA And your soul goes crying to your father for vengeance—

SQUARCIO If indeed, my daughter, there be any soul left when the body is slain

FERRUCCIO [*crossing himself hastily*] Dog of a bandit do you dare doubt the existence of God and the soul?

SQUARCIO I think, Excellency, that the soul is so precious a gift that God will not

give it to a man for nothing. He must earn it by being something and doing something. I should not like to kill a man with a good soul. I've had a dog that had, I'm persuaded, made itself something of a soul, and if anyone had murdered that dog, I would have slain him. But shew me a man with no soul, one who has never done anything or been anything, and I will kill him for ten crowns with as little remorse as I would stick a pig.

SANDRO. Unless he be a nobleman, of course—

SQUARCIO. In which case the price is fifty crowns.

FERRUCCIO. Soul or no soul?

SQUARCIO. When it comes to a matter of fifty crowns, Excellency, business is business. The man who pays me must square the account with the devil. It is for my employer to consider whether the action be a good one or no; it is for me to earn his money honestly. When I said I should not like to kill a man with a good soul, I meant killing on my own account, not professionally.

FERRUCCIO. Are you such a fool then as to spoil your own trade by sometimes killing people for nothing?

SQUARCIO. One kills a snake for nothing, Excellency. One kills a dog for nothing sometimes.

SANDRO [*apologetically*]. Only a mad dog, Excellency, of course.

SQUARCIO. A pet dog, too. One that eats and eats and is useless, and makes an honest man's house dirty. [*He rises*]. Come, Sandro, and help me to clean up. You, Giulia, stay and entertain his Excellency.

He and Sandro make a hammock of the cloth, in which they carry the wooden platters and fragments of the meal indoors. Ferruccio is left alone with Giulia. The gloaming deepens.

FERRUCCIO. Does your father do the house work with a great girl like you idling about? Squarcio is a fool, after all.

GIULIA. No, Signor; he has left me here to prevent you from escaping.

FERRUCCIO. There is nothing to be gained by killing me, Giuliaccia.

GIULIA. Perhaps, but I do not know. I saw Sandro make a sign to my father, that is why they went in. Sandro has something in his head.

FERRUCCIO [*brutally*]. Lice, no doubt.

GIULIA [*unmoved*]. That would only make him scratch his head, Signor, not make signs

with it to my father. You did wrong to throw the Cardinal out of the window.

FERRUCCIO. Indeed, and pray why?

GIULIA. He will pay thirty crowns for your dead body. Then Sandro could marry me.

FERRUCCIO. And be broken on the wheel for it.

GIULIA. It would look like an accident, Signor. Sandro is very clever; and he is so humble and cheerful and good-tempered that people do not suspect him as they suspect my father.

FERRUCCIO. Giuletta, if I reach Sacromonte in safety, I swear to send you thirty crowns by a sure messenger within ten days. Then you can marry your Sandro. How does that appeal to you?

GIULIA. Your oath is not worth twenty pence, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Do you think I will die here like a rat in a trap— [*his breath fails him*].

GIULIA. Rats have to wait in their traps for death, Signor. Why not you?

FERRUCCIO. I'll fight.

GIULIA. You are welcome, Signor. The blood flows freest when it is hot.

FERRUCCIO. She devil! Listen to me, Giuletta—

GIULIA. It is useless, Signor. Giuletta or Giuliaccia, it makes no difference. If they two in there kill you it will be no more to me—except for the money—than if my father trod on a snail.

FERRUCCIO. Oh, it is not possible that I, a nobleman, should die by such filthy hands.

GIULIA. You have lived by them, Signor. I see no sign of any work on your own hands. We can bring death as well as life, we poor people, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Mother of God, what shall I do?

GIULIA. Pray, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Pray! With the taste of death in my mouth? I can think of nothing.

GIULIA. It is only that you have forgotten your beads, Signor [*she picks up the Friar's rosary*]. You remember the old man's bones rattling. Here they are [*she rattles them before him*].

FERRUCCIO. That reminds me. I know of a painter in the north that can paint such beautiful saints that the heart goes out of one's body to look at them. If I get out of this alive I'll make him paint St Barbara so that everyone can see that she is lovelier than St Cecilia, who looks like my washer-

capable of discharging the duties of a public post, he resigns

PROTEUS [*alarmed*] Resigns! What are you driving at?

CRASSUS A king cannot resign

NICOBAR You might as well talk of beheading yourself You cant behead yourself

BOANERGES Other people can, though

MAGNUS Do not let us quarrel about words, gentlemen I cannot resign But I can abdicate ALL THE REST [*starting to their feet*] Abdicate! [*They stare at him in consternation*]

AMANDA [*whistling a descending minor scale very expressively*]!!!!!! [*She sits down*]

MAGNUS Of course, abdicate Lysistrata you have been a teacher of history You can assure your colleagues that there is nothing unprecedented in an abdication. The Emperor Charles the Fifth, for instance—

LYSISTRATA Oh, Charles the Fifth be—be bothered! he's not good enough Sir I have stood by you as far as I dared Dont throw me over You must not abdicate [*She sits down, distressed*]

PROTEUS You cannot abdicate except by my advice

MAGNUS I am acting upon your advice.

PROTEUS Nonsense! [*He sits down*]

BALBUS Ridiculous! [*He sits down*]

PLINY Youre not serious, you know [*He sits down*]

NICOBAR You cant upset the apple cart like this [*He sits down*]

CRASSUS I must say this is not playing the game [*He sits down*]

BOANERGES [*powerfully*] Well, why not? Why not? Though as an old Republican I have no respect for His Majesty as a King, I have a great respect for him as a Strong Man. But he is not the only pebble on the beach Why not have done with this superstition of monarchy, and bring the British Commonwealth into line with all the other great Powers today as a republic? [*He sits down*]

MAGNUS My abdication does not involve that, Mr Boanerges I am abdicating to save the monarchy, not to destroy it. I shall be succeeded by my son Robert, Prince of Wales He will make an admirable constitutional monarch

PLINY Oh, come! Dont be hard on the lad, sir He has plenty of brains

MAGNUS Oh yes, yes, yes I did not mean that he is a nonentity quite the contrary he

is much cleverer than I am But I have never been able to induce him to take any interest in parliamentary politics He prefers intellectual pursuits

NICOBAR Dont you believe it He is up to his neck in business

MAGNUS Just so He asks me why I waste my time with you here pretending to govern the country when it is really governed by Breakages, Limited And really I hardly know how to answer him

CRASSUS Things are like that nowadays My son says just the same

LYSISTRATA Personally I get on very well with the Prince, but somehow I do not feel that he is interested in what I am doing

BALBUS He isnt. He wont interfere with you as long as you dont interfere with him Just the right king for us Not pig-headed Not meddlesome Thinks that nothing we do matters a rap What do you say, Joe?

PROTEUS After all, why not? if your Majesty is in earnest

MAGNUS I assure you I am very much in earnest

PROTEUS Well, I confess I did not foresee this turn of events But I ought to have foreseen it. What your Majesty proposes is the straightforward, logical, intellectually honest solution of our difficulty Consequently it is the last solution I could have expected in politics But I reckoned without your Majesty's character The more I think of it the more clearly I see that you are right—that you are taking the only course open to you

CRASSUS I never said I was against it, Joe

BALBUS Neither did I

NICOBAR I think theres a great deal to be said for it I have no objection.

PLINY One king is no worse than another, is he?

BOANERGES Is he any better? The way you fellows scuttle backward and forward from one mind to another whenever Joe holds up his finger is disgusting This is a Cabinet of sheep

PROTEUS Well, give the flock a better lead if you can Have you anything else to propose?

BOANERGES I dont know that I have on the spur of the moment We should have had notice of this But I suppose the King must do as he thinks right

PROTEUS Then the goat goes with the sheep, so thats all right

BOANERGES Who are you calling a goat?
 NICOBAR If you come to that, who are you calling sheep?

AMANDA Steady there, children! steady! steady! [*To the King*] You have brought us all round, sir, as usual.

PROTEUS There is nothing more to be said

AMANDA That means another half hour at least

BOANERGES Woman: this is not the moment for your tomfooleries.

PROTEUS [*impressively*] Bill is right, Amanda [*He rises and becomes the conventional House of Commons orator*]

Ministers compose themselves to listen with grave attention, as if in church, but Lysistrata is contemptuous and Amanda amused

PROTEUS [*continuing*] It is a solemn moment It is a moment in which an old tie is being broken I am not ashamed to confess that it is a tie from which I have learned something

MALE MINISTERS [*murmur*] Hear hear! Hear hear!

PROTEUS For my own part—and I think I may speak for others here as well—it has been no mere political tie, but a tie of sincere friendship

Renewed murmurs of sympathy Increasing emotion

PROTEUS We have had our disagreements—as which of us has not?—but they have been family quarrels

CRASSUS That's all. Nothing more

PROTEUS May I say lovers' quarrels?

PLINY [*wiping his eyes*] You may, Joe You may

PROTEUS My friends, we came here to a meeting. We find, alas! that the meeting is to be a leavetaking [*Crassus sniffs tearfully*] It is a sad leavetaking on our part, but a cordial one [*Hear Hear from Pliny*] We are cast down, but not discouraged Looking back to the past with regret, we can still look forward to the future with hope That future has its dangers and its difficulties It will bring us new problems, and it will bring us face to face with a new king But the new problems and the new king will not make us forget our old counsellor, monarch, and—he will allow me to say—comrade [*Hear Hears ad libitum*] I know my words will find an echo in all your hearts when I conclude by saying that whatsoever king shall reign—

AMANDA You'll be the Vicar of Bray, Joe

Uproar Proteus flings himself into his chair

indignantly

BALBUS Shame!

NICOBAR. Shut up, you b—

PLINY. A joke's a joke, but really—

CRASSUS Too bad, Amanda! Behave yourself.

LYSISTRATA She has a perfect right to speak. You are a parcel of sentimental fools.

BOANERGES [*rising*] Silence Order

AMANDA Sorry.

BOANERGES So you ought to be Where's your manners? Where's your education? King Magnus we part, but we part as strong men part. as friends The Prime Minister has correctly represented the sentiments of all the men present I call on them to express those sentiments in the good old English fashion [*Singing in stentorian tones*] Fo-o-o-o-r-r-r

MALE MINISTERS EXCEPT PROTEUS [*rising and singing*]

—he's a jolly good fel-low

For he's a jolly good fel-low

For he's—

MAGNUS [*peremptorily*] Stop Stop

Sudden silence and misgiving. They sit down furtively

MAGNUS I thank you with all my heart, but there is a misapprehension. We are not taking leave of one another I have no intention of withdrawing from an active part in politics

PROTEUS What!

MAGNUS You are looking on me, with an emotion which has deeply touched me, as a man with a political past But I look on myself rather as a man with a political future I have not yet told you my plans

NICOBAR What plans?

BALBUS A retired king cant have plans and a future

MAGNUS Why not? I am looking forward to a most exciting and enjoyable time As I shall of course dissolve parliament, the fun will begin with a general election

BOANERGES [*dismayed*] But Ive only just been elected Do you mean that I shall have to stand two elections in one month? Have you thought of the expenses?

MAGNUS Surely your expenses will be paid by the State

BOANERGES Paid by the State! Is that all you know about electioneering in England?

PROTEUS You will get your whack out of the party funds, Bill; and if you cant find the extras you must put up with straight votes.

like for all I care I am going out of politics. Politics is a mug's game [*He goes*]

CRASSUS [*rising reluctantly and taking his hat*] If Nick goes, I shall have to go too.

MAGNUS Can you really tear yourself away from politics?

CRASSUS Only too glad to be well out of them, if Breakages will let me They shoved me into it; and I daresay they'll find another job for me [*He goes*]

PLINY [*cheerful to the last as he, too, goes for his hat*] Well, I am glad nothing's happened You know, sir, nothing ever really does happen in the Cabinet Never mind their bit of temper They'll feed out of your hand to-morrow [*He goes*]

BALBUS [*after taking his hat*] Now that they're all gone I don't mind saying that if anything should ever happen to the throne, and your Majesty should become a President with a Cabinet to pick, you might easily find a worse Home Secretary than me, with all my faults

MAGNUS I shall bear it in mind By the way, if you should happen to overtake the Prime Minister, will you be so good as to remind him that we quite forgot to settle that little affair of the proposal of America to annex the British Commonwealth

BALBUS By the Lord, so we did! Well, that's a good one! Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha! [*He goes out laughing heartily*]

MAGNUS They don't take it in, Lizzie. not one bit It is as if another planet were crashing into us The kingdom and the power and the glory will pass from us and leave us naked, face to face with our real selves at last

LYSISTRATA So much the better, if by our real selves you mean the old English stock that was unlike any other Nowadays men all over the world are as much alike as hotel dinners It's no use pretending that the America of George Washington is going to swallow up the England of Queen Anne The America of George Washington is as dead as Queen Anne What they call an American is only a wop pretending to be a

Pilgrim Father He is no more Uncle Jonathan than you are John Bull

MAGNUS Yes we live in a world of wops, all melting into one another; and when all the frontiers are down London may be outvoted by Tennessee, and all the other places where we still madly teach our children the mentality of an eighteenth century village school.

LYSISTRATA. Never fear, sir It is not the most ignorant national crowd that will come out on top, but the best power station, for you can't do without power stations, and you can't run them on patriotic songs and hatred of the foreigner, and guff and bugaboo, though you can run nationalism on nothing else But I am heartbroken at your not coming into the House with us to keep old England in front and lead a new Party against Breakages [*tears come into her eyes*]

MAGNUS [*patting her consolingly on the back*] That would have been splendid, wouldn't it? But I am too old fashioned This is a farce that younger men must finish

AMANDA [*taking her arm*] Come home with me, dear. I will sing to you until you can't help laughing Come

Lysistrata pockets her handkerchief, shakes the King's hands impulsively, and goes with Amanda The King plunges into deep thought Presently the Queen comes back

THE QUEEN. Now Magnus it's time to dress for dinner

MAGNUS [*much disturbed*] Oh, not now I have something very big to think about I don't want any dinner.

THE QUEEN [*peremptorily*] No dinner! Did anyone ever hear of such a thing! You know you will not sleep if you think after seven o'clock

MAGNUS [*worried*] But really, Jemima—

THE QUEEN [*going to him and taking his arm*] Now, now, now! don't be naughty I mustn't be late for dinner Come on, like a good little boy

The King, with a grimace of hopeless tenderness, allows himself to be led away.

THE END

XXXIII

JITTA'S ATONEMENT

BY SIEGFRIED TREBITSCH

Author of Genesung, Weltuntergang, Das Haus am Abhang, Tagwandler, Ein Muttersohn, Der Tod und die Liebe, Gefährliche Jahre, Spätes Licht, Die Frau ohne Dienstag, Der Geliebte, Die Last des Blutes, etc. etc.

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD SHAW

ACT I

1920 *The drawing room in a flat in Vienna. It is fashionably decorated and elegantly furnished, but not homelike, as there are no books nor personal belongings nor household odds and ends lying about. The two photogravure reproductions of pictures on the walls, symmetrically placed at equal distances from the door, are of the refinedly aphrodisiac character considered de rigueur in hotels. But the place is not quite like a hotel sitting room, because there is very little furniture—only two seats, a couch, and a small table with a glass flower-vase and a mirror on it.*

It is an oblong room, and from the point of view of anyone looking towards the corner the long wall on the right has in the middle of it the door leading to the entrance hall, and the short wall on the left has an open door close to the corner through which a bed with rose-coloured hangings is partly visible. In the same wall further forward from the same point of view is the fireplace.

The couch is in the corner, parallel to the longer wall, not quite close against it. A comfortable upholstered stool, really a chair without a back, is at the foot of the couch. This stool has a cushion on it which evidently belongs to the couch. The other seat, a chair with arms, is almost in the middle of the room, but nearer to the fireplace than to the door. The table stands near the corner of the fireplace.

It is almost dark.

Mrs Billiter, an elderly housekeeper, has something of the same undomesticated air as the room. Her hair, though not aggressively dyed, is still rather younger than her face. She is well dressed, like a hotel manageress. She opens the door, letting in some electric light from the hall. She has a silver tray in her hands, with a siphon, two tumblers, and a bottle on it. She switches on the light at the door, and crosses the room to the table, where she puts down the tray. She looks round the room to see whether it is tidy. She goes

to the stool, takes the cushion from it, and puts it in its proper place on the couch.

Somebody rings at the outer door of the flat. Mrs Billiter goes out to open it.

A GIRL'S VOICE [*the accent is not that of a lady*] Gentleman ordered these. Suppose it's all right, isn't it?

MRS BILLITER'S VOICE Yes. Just bring them in, and put them in the vase for me, will you?

Mrs Billiter returns, followed by a girl from the florist's shop, carrying a handsome present of flowers.

MRS BILLITER [*pointing to the vase*] There I'll fetch some water.

She goes into the bedroom and switches on the light there. The roseate hangings of the bed appear to great advantage. The flower girl, on her way to the vase, stops fascinated.

Mrs Billiter returns with a jug from the bedroom washstand—a very pretty jug in rose color and gold.

The flower girl puts the roses into the vase, and Mrs Billiter fills it with water.

Mrs Billiter takes the jug back into the bedroom, and the girl steals after her to the door and peeps enviously in.

Mrs Billiter returns, putting out the bedroom light as she does so, and finds the girl at the door.

THE FLOWER GIRL Just right for two, ain't it?

MRS BILLITER [*incensed*] What do you mean, with your "Just right for two"?

THE FLOWER GIRL [*grinning*] Oh, it's nothing to me. But I know.

MRS BILLITER You know too much, you do. Are they paid for?

THE FLOWER GIRL Oh yes, that's quite all right. [*She grins again, shewing no sign of going.*]

MRS BILLITER [*peremptorily*] Well? What are you waiting for? And what are you grinning at?

THE FLOWER GIRL Aint the gentleman here? He promised to leave me something

MRS BILLITER [*impatiently groping in her purse and extracting a tip*] That's how they give themselves away, offering tips when they have no call to [*She gives her some money*] There! Now, out you go I'm busy

THE FLOWER GIRL [*sarcastic*] Sorry, I'm sure Thanks awfully. [*She goes to the door, but stops on hearing the outer door opened by a latch-key from without*] Oh, here is the gentleman

The gentleman enters. The girl ogles him He recognizes her, and makes a gesture towards his pocket

MRS BILLITER [*very decisively*] That's all right, sir she's had what you promised [*To the girl, sternly*] Good evening to you [*She sails to the door so formidably that the girl, after an ineffectual grimace, has to go*]

The moment the gentleman is left alone he shews signs of severe physical suffering His ascent of the stairs has brought on an attack of angina pectoris He makes his way to the stool, and collapses on it, struggling with the paroxysm Mrs Billiter returns

MRS BILLITER [*running to him*] Oh dear, oh dear, has it come on again, sir?

THE GENTLEMAN [*a little better*] It's all right now, Mrs Billiter I took the stairs too fast I rush at them without thinking [*He rises, and tries to take off his overcoat She helps him*] Thank you, Mrs Billiter I—I—I—[*gasping*] Just a moment Whew! [*As the coat comes off he plunges to the armchair, and sinks into it*]

MRS BILLITER How often have I begged you never to walk upstairs but always to take the lift? And now see the state you are in!

THE GENTLEMAN Don't look at me it will only distress you Angina pectoris is a horrible thing; but it passes off soon. You can do nothing, thank you

MRS BILLITER [*taking his hat and coat out into the vestibule*] Dear! dear! dear!

Rather dazed by the attack, he sits up, straightening his collar and coat rather irresolutely, and looking very careworn indeed He is well dressed, on the verge of fifty, going grey, very distinguished in appearance and kindly in manner

MRS BILLITER [*returning*] Why will you never take the lift, sir? It isn't as if anyone in this house knew you And for that matter you meet people on the stairs as well as in the lift

THE GENTLEMAN I know, but I mustn't let the liftmen see me coming here too often People talk, even when they have to live by

holding their tongues

MRS BILLITER [*reproachfully*] Oh, sir!

THE GENTLEMAN [*quickly saving the situation*] Except you, Mrs Billiter. You are an exception to all the rules

MRS BILLITER It's you who are the exception, sir I wish all the other gentlemen that keep rooms here on the quiet to enjoy themselves were like you There are people and people in this world; and I know a gentleman when I see him And I feel sure your lady is a real lady, and always the same lady; though of course I take care never to see her

THE GENTLEMAN That's very kind of you, Mrs Billiter [*He rises to go to the table*]

MRS BILLITER [*stopping him*] Now do sit quiet a moment, sir What was it you wanted?

THE GENTLEMAN A mouthful of soda water

MRS BILLITER There I'll get it for you Sit down [*He does so She goes to the table and fills a glass from the siphon*] If you would only let me put a drop of brandy in it?

THE GENTLEMAN [*shaking his head decisively*] It would probably kill me I know. I am a doctor [*He takes the glass from her*]. Thank you [*He drinks*]

MRS BILLITER You are not right yet I can see it in your face

THE GENTLEMAN [*hands her back the glass a little abruptly, and pulls himself together*]"

MRS BILLITER There! I shouldn't have said that [*She replaces the glass on the table, snubbed*]

THE GENTLEMAN Not at all I know how anxious you are about me, and how kindly you mean it. But I am all right now; and I—I—[*he takes out his watch and looks at it*] I am expecting somebody

MRS BILLITER [*taking the hint*] Yes, sir. I'm going [*She crosses the room to the door, but turns for a moment appealingly before going out*] But you will take the lift next time, sir, won't you? If anything were to happen to you—not that I think anything like that, of course; but—

THE GENTLEMAN Of course not, Mrs Billiter Still—[*he shrugs his shoulders*]"

MRS BILLITER Yes, sir. And then what could I do but send for the police?

THE GENTLEMAN Quite so, quite so If I come again I will take the lift I promise.

MRS BILLITER Thank you, sir Thank you kindly [*She goes out, closing the door very softly behind her*]

The gentleman, left alone, rises and goes to

the table, where he takes up the mirror and looks at his wrinkles and his blanching hair. He shakes his head and puts the mirror down. Then he takes out a cigaret, puts it between his lips, takes out a match, and is about to strike it when the bell rings twice. His face lights up, he throws the match and the cigaret into the fire, and goes out eagerly to admit the visitor, leaving the door of the room open. Immediately afterwards a veiled lady hurries in like a hunted creature. He follows her, shuts the door, and comes to her in the middle of the room. They embrace.

THE GENTLEMAN [*affectionately*] Why do you always look as if you were running away, and had just stumbled into my arms by chance?

THE LADY I always feel as if my husband were lying in wait for me at the next turn.

THE GENTLEMAN Well, suppose he were! You are not afraid of poor Alfred, are you? At home you are a perfect tyrant to him.

JITTA I should have no courage if he caught me. Besides, if we are found out there will be an end of everything.

BRUNO I almost wish we were found out.

JITTA Why?

BRUNO It would force us to stand by one another, and come out openly before all the world with our love.

JITTA [*embracing him impulsively*] Shall we?

BRUNO There is my wife. Always my wife.

JITTA [*recoiling from him impatiently, and throwing her cloak on the couch*] Oh yes. Agnes. Always Agnes, Agnes, Agnes.

BRUNO She has done nothing to deserve our betrayal of her. She has sacrificed her life to me. I can't face what she would suffer.

JITTA Has she sacrificed more for you than you for her? It is not the thought of Agnes that holds me back. But the scandal would ruin you. [*She takes off her hat, and puts it on the table*]

BRUNO [*with sudden energy*] I want to be ruined. Oh, the life of a University professor. His respectability kills his mind. His wife's respectability kills her soul. They both become mere shells of their former selves going through life in grooves, on rails like tramcars, envying the tinkers and gypsies. If it were not for Agnes I should commit some disgraceful offence to free myself.

JITTA I am afraid disgrace would not mend matters. I could not bear yours.

BRUNO Nor I yours. We are in the net.

JITTA Not here, Bruno. We have broken through the net into our dreamland. [*Now*

*that her hat and veil are off. Jitta is revealed as one of those attractively refined women whose wistfully sensitive unsmiling mouths and tragic eyes not only make imaginative men fancy unfathomable depths in their natures, and something undefinably sad and splendid in their destinies, but actually force this conception on the women themselves, however commonplace their characters and circumstances may be. Jitta is nothing more extraordinary than the wife of a college don, and has done nothing more heroic than fall in love with another and more poetic don (also married), but to her lover and herself her life is as dignified and beautiful as her face, and their relations as nobly tragic as her eyes. So, as we are all a little like that, let us share their dream for a moment whilst she continues, sitting down beside him.] You must brush off the bits of the broken net. [*Tracing on his brow*] There is a thread of it here, and here, and straight down here. [*She kisses his brow*] No, they are not gone yet.*

BRUNO It is not the net. I can leave that behind when I come here into the dreamland. These last few months have been wonderful. But they have been terrible.

JITTA Yes, wonderful and terrible. But they have been real, real. Life in the net is never real. It is all acting.

BRUNO That is true. But there is something still more real than the dream.

JITTA What is that?

BRUNO The awakening.

JITTA For me there will be no awakening.

BRUNO There is always the tap at the door in the morning. The tap with bony knuckles. The caller.

JITTA Death! Oh, why will you always harp on that? Death is nothing. Life with love is everything. Think, Bruno. We are here alone. There is nothing between us and happiness except the courage to grasp it. Can you never be happy?

BRUNO Can any mortal be happy?

JITTA [*suddenly prosaic and impatient*] Yes. Alfred can. A glass of wine and a cigar can make Alfred happy. A vote of thanks can make Alfred happy. A cheque for £25 can make him happy. But I cannot make you happy.

BRUNO Dearest love, you can, you do make me inexpressibly happy. So happy, that every time you go away from me, and I stand listening to your footsteps dying away in the distance—I always listen to

them to catch the last sound of you—I am stabbed with a fear that I have held you in my arms for the last time. But when we have been parted for days, and I am here waiting for you and thinking the moments endless until you come, and at last I hear your ring, I suddenly become like a freshman just up from school [*She laughs, smoothing his grey hair*] Yes I know, but grey as I am, I am still a hobbledehoy, just a student waiting for his girl at the corner of the street where her shop is

JITTA [*moved*] And do you think it is any different with me? All day I long to be with you, to say a thousand things to you! And when at last— [*she finishes the sentence by a caress*]! When you are away from me, I plod through my housework, and just count the days until—until this [*she again presses him in her arms, and draws him down beside her on the couch*]

BRUNO If only I were young! Then I could really begin a new life with you instead of merely thinking and dreaming about it

JITTA I like it better as it is. I don't want to see you every day and become a commonplace with you, Bruno

BRUNO But are you content with these heartbreaking stolen hours? I'd risk you becoming a commonplace. I want you to be a commonplace for me, but I daresay I should bore you

JITTA [*sighing blissfully*] The happiness of these stolen hours is so delicious that it makes up to me for everything I have to endure between times. And who knows what would happen if I were to break up your home and shatter your career? Are you sure we should not be too tired out, too broken by the effort, to enjoy our rest? One has to be young to do such things, Bruno—young enough to be able to forget

BRUNO [*sadly*] You are right. Our love looks well only by candlelight. It won't stand daylight

JITTA [*refusing to be discouraged*] Daylight is for your work, for your great book that is to be the crown of your career. But here in the candlelight you belong to me, and to me only

BRUNO [*quickly*] Oh, not here alone. Do you think that my wife and my daughter put you quite out of my head when I am at home? They never do. You are everywhere. But what must it be for you? I often reproach

myself—

JITTA [*softly*] You mustn't do that. I am not unhappy, Bruno. I was at first. I hardly dared go home and face Alfred's inquisitive eyes. But he saw nothing. His self-conceit is impenetrable. His cheerful grin killed my conscience. I hold up my head now everywhere. I am proud of belonging to you. When one is really happy, one is ruthless and shameless

BRUNO Jitta, do you know that you belonged to me before we ever saw one another?

JITTA Yes. We were destined—

BRUNO. I don't mean that. I mean that we actually belonged to one another physically. I mean that my daughter—born before we knew one another—is your daughter

JITTA Edith! What do you mean, Bruno? You have the strangest fancies

BRUNO This is not a fancy, Jitta. It is a hard scientific fact. I worked out its theoretic possibility before Edith was born—before I ever set eyes on you. It strikes me dumb with wonder when I think how it has worked out between us. The daughter of my wife, my child and hers, not yours, resembles you, aye, loves you more than she loves her own mother, though she may not know it

JITTA [*thoughtfully*] Strange. And I love your Edith as only a childless woman can love the child of the man she has interested and saved. I am not clever enough to share the rest of your science with you, but this I believe and accept. But how can such a miracle come about?

BRUNO [*mystically*] Men do not yet realize that no prophetic aspiration of theirs can fall utterly without fruit if its roots lie deep enough in their innermost conviction

JITTA Bruno, that must be right. It is an inspiration. It takes hold of my heart with both hands. You really are great

BRUNO Not at all. It is not new. Everybody knows it nowadays in the rough. But it has never been worked out scientifically far enough to explain this miracle of Edith and you. Well, I am working it out, and there is somebody else working at it with me

JITTA [*jealous*] Somebody else!

BRUNO. You would never guess who

JITTA I do not want to guess. I do not care.

BRUNO Think of the most hardened materialist you know—the very last man you could imagine lending himself to such a mystical speculation!

JITTA [*relieved*] Oh, a man! The most hopeless materialist I know is my husband, and I do not want to be reminded of him just now

BRUNO But it is your husband I mean I have converted him

JITTA Oh, impossible He would never believe a thing like that Don't let Alfred deceive you, Bruno He is only playing with your belief because he feels sure of discovering some grossly material explanation of it, and making you ridiculous He does not believe it as you believe it

BRUNO [*brighly*] I do not say he does I do not say he can Alfred is clever, but he is not me—or rather, not us two two in one

JITTA Darling!

BRUNO All the same, he is burning with ambition to have his name connected with a new departure in science As he has failed to do it in physics he is willing to do it in psychology rather than not do it at all.

JITTA [*scornfully*] At your expense?

BRUNO Not altogether, dearest He really has given me some quite handy curve diagrams for my lectures He knows everything what he lacks is a sense of the significance of what he knows I am really sorry for him, and should like to help him

JITTA You can help him without letting him rob you of your ideas.

BRUNO It is not he who is robbing me of my ideas it is I who am robbing him of his wife, and the less he is conscious of his loss the meaner thief am I I feel that through and through [*He kisses her hand passionately*] I have taken a priceless treasure from him I must make amends somehow I must pay my debt That sense of obligation is in my very bones

JITTA [*looking hard at him*] Why have I never felt this sense of obligation to your wife? Have I no conscience? or have you too much?

BRUNO It is not the same You do not feel that you have taken anything from Agnes you feel that she has taken something from you.

JITTA I know that I have a divine right to you And I know that she has not.

BRUNO There are other rights beside divine rights If I had never come into your life, you would perhaps have come to some sort of understanding with Alfred, and he would have found some sort of happiness in

possessing you

JITTA He has all the happiness he is capable of

BRUNO We have no right to say so. I have taken you from him

JITTA You have not taken me from him I belonged to myself and I gave you myself

BRUNO I have betrayed his trust

JITTA As I have betrayed your wife's trust

BRUNO That is quite different Your relations with Agnes are mere society relations, conventional and superficial But I am your husband's comrade we were chums at school we were at college together we are professional colleagues He knows me intimately, and if he were not such a confoundedly bad psychologist he would know that Nature meant you to be my wife It is a stroke of luck for us that he knows nothing—if indeed it is only luck, and not his subconscious knowledge that he must not let himself know Yes he not only does not know he will not know he refuses to know And that refusal, because it is unconscious, binds my sense of honor as if he spared us knowingly

JITTA [*changing her tone, and trying to soothe and coax him*] Darling you are tormenting yourself for nothing Let me see whether I can cure you of all these scruples and fancies They are only spooks [*She draws him towards the bedroom*] Come

BRUNO No, not yet [*He gets away from her by standing up She shrinks a little, wounded*] I am telling you this once for all, so that I may never have to speak of it again God knows it is not to involve you in my struggles with myself, nor to whitewash myself, that I am spending our priceless moments like this I am as impatient as you are I long for you beyond all expression But there is something you must do for me Something you can understand only when you know the rights of it

JITTA [*repelled and anxious*] But what is it?

BRUNO [*pulling himself together*] I want to speak to you about my book I have something very important to say to you about it

JITTA [*a little disappointed*] Bruno can't that wait a little? You know how I value your work, but we have so little time left this evening—

BRUNO [*resolutely*] It is just because I have so little time left that I dare not put this off any longer You know the value of my book Well, you must take charge of it.

JITTA You need not trouble about that, Bruno. It will make your name famous without my help.

BRUNO [*looking hard at her, and forcing the emphasis of his words to the utmost*] Not my name His name.

JITTA God of Heaven! whose name?

BRUNO. Your husband's

JITTA [*springing up*] Alfred's!

BRUNO. Listen to me The book is finished the typed copy will be found in my desk And the title-page reads "Fetters of the Feminine Psyche, by Professor Alfred Lenkheim"

JITTA. Bruno! You are mad

BRUNO I burnt the original manuscript yesterday there is not a word of it in my handwriting left to prove that I am the author They will find a book by your husband among my things that is all [*She is about to protest*] Promise me that you will leave this secret buried in my grave.

JITTA [*beside herself*] But why? Why? Why?

BRUNO [*seizing her hands, but now pleading like a lover*] It is my deepest wish It is my most urgent prayer to you, Jitta

JITTA [*gasping*] You ask me to do that! to promise you this unheard-of thing! This man who has no soul, who has been guilty of everything to me that a man can be guilty of to a woman except the infidelity that I would welcome with delight to excuse my own (he is not man enough for that) the fruit of your life's work is to drop into his mouth! And I am to be your accomplice in such a crime! No I cannot Never

BRUNO [*soothing her*] I know how hard it is for you, darling That is why I have not been able to bring myself to tell you until today But I know you will not fail me

JITTA Don't say that, Bruno, as if it settled everything I cannot act like a madwoman Give me a reason

BRUNO. I will Listen. A book by a dead man is an orphan Orphans sometimes die when they are not adopted Mendel's masterpiece lay dead for thirty-five years while the fame of the living Darwin spread over the world If Alfred adopts my orphan it will not perish, for Alfred's wife will adopt it too

JITTA. Oh, Bruno, Bruno, how can you? That is so clever, so damnably clever. Has it come to mere cleverness between us?

BRUNO I asked for a promise You asked for a reason

JITTA But I am thinking of your fame—
BRUNO [*snapping his fingers*] Psha! That for my fame! What does it matter from whose hands the new generation will take the torch to carry on the great race of science? The truth will be as true with Alfred's name tacked on to it as Bruno's

JITTA [*impatiently*] Oh yes, yes. I know all that. It sounds like a sentence from your annual address to your students It's not true, Bruno I feel it It is not human There is something else at the back of your mind.

BRUNO No—except this When I finally and irrevocably sealed my resolution yesterday by burning the manuscript, there came to me a moment of extraordinary exaltation in which I saw this sacrifice as my atonement to Alfred It is the price at which I buy his wife from him; and now at last I can take my happiness with both hands, free in my conscience, right in my heart, in all honor as well as in all affection to the very end [*He clasps her to his breast*]

JITTA [*still wondering at him*] You throw the greatest achievement of your life to him like a bone to a dog, and then feel you have made us two one [*Breaking away from him*] No, no, Bruno you are asking too much You know that I love you as my man, without a thought of your greatness and your work, but all the same your work, your greatness, are a part of you, and I love every bit of you, your body, your soul, your reputation, your work, everything that would not exist if you did not exist All that is my treasure and my pride When you take a handful of it and throw it into the mud, you make me so much the poorer Have you thought of that?

BRUNO When two people stand to one another as we stand, the children born from their intercourse are not always children of flesh and blood, but inspirations, intuitions, convictions that they cannot discard without unfaithfulness This is such an inspiration Will you be unfaithful to it?

JITTA Bruno you want to play at Providence. Alfred is far too conceited to let anyone play Providence to him If he refuses, what then?

BRUNO. He will not refuse. I have thought all that out Why should he refuse to father a book which he already regards as half his own? He believes that I could never have written it without him. And you know how ambitious he is. I can depend on Alfred

absolutely Can I depend on you?

JITTA [*half beaten*] Who knows? I cannot depend on myself This sacrifice is no child born of our intercourse, Bruno you may be its father, but I am not its mother I shall be its stepmother, and I shall hate it as no step-mother ever hated before But the book is yours, and I have no rights over it it must take the course you desire I cannot go further than that When you ask me to bind myself by a solemn vow, I— [*shuddering*] no, no it is inhuman a mockery, an impossibility

BRUNO I know I am putting your love to the cruellest test, but oh, Jitta, Jitta, do not fail me

JITTA So be it. [*He snatches her hands and kisses them*] I promise you that if I survive the day that takes you from me, I will hide the truth as you demand, and take all the ghastly consequences just as you are mad enough to mean them Are you satisfied now?

BRUNO [*clasping her convulsively to him and hardly able to speak*] I—I—thanks, thanks My love

JITTA [*extricating herself quickly from his embrace*] But if God wishes to be good to me he will never let me live to keep my promise

BRUNO I could not have pained you like this if I had the smallest doubt that I shall go first and go soon.

JITTA Dont say that Oh, do let us forget Death for one moment

BRUNO Death is nothing if I could be sure that I should die tonight I should be unspeakably glad, for I should not have to strike you the bitterest blow of all

JITTA Bruno! Another blow!

BRUNO Yes, another My strength is going from me, and I need it all to force myself not to play the coward

JITTA How?

BRUNO By leaving you today without daring to tell you that I do not intend to meet you again

JITTA [*struck to the heart*] Not meet me again! Leave me!

BRUNO [*with deliberate emphasis*] This must be the last time [*Rising, with a sudden fanciful recklessness*] Come, let it be the best. Let it be so full of happiness that we can say "It is enough farewell"

JITTA You are going to give me up! You can bring yourself to do that!

BRUNO Nonsense! I shall never give you

up But it would be a crime to let you meet me here again at such a risk

JITTA How is the risk greater now than it has always been?

BRUNO It was only a risk of being caught here with a live man That was nothing only a secret that three can keep What about the risk of being found with a dead one?

JITTA [*about to shriek*]

BRUNO [*covering her mouth with his hand*] Hush—sh! [*She looks affrightedly at him he looks gravely and significantly at her*] It is all up with me, dearest I could not stop working, and my heart—

JITTA [*with agonizing anxiety*] Is it worse?

BRUNO [*with a ghost of a laugh*] Worse! It has gone all to pieces I had no right to let you come this evening I have put off telling you too long, but when I climbed those terrible stairs just now, I knew You would have to give your name to the police Our relations would be shouted through the streets and posted on the newspaper bills if you were found here with a—with a [*he cannot say it, and indicates, by a gesture, the figure of a dead man lying on the floor*]

JITTA [*flinching at the image, but steadfast in her thought*] Have no fear, Bruno Why did you not tell me sooner what was troubling you? I could have relieved your mind I have known all along that you were ill, and my only fear was that that [*she repeats his gesture*] might happen when you were alone instead of in my arms Does that sound as if I cared what would become of me without you?

BRUNO But I care, dearest That is why I am resolved on our parting before this crazy tired old clock [*he taps his left breast*] runs down and stops ticking for good and all

JITTA Never There is only one thing that can part me from you, and that is not the stopping of the clock, but of your love for me No other danger exists for me, and no forethought of ours can protect us against that if it comes [*Abandoning herself to her passion*] All the more reason why we must make the most of our love while it is within our reach I love you I love you we are alive, not dead you are living with my life as well as your own your blood surges to mix with mine you cannot die while I hold you fast All the rest is an uneasy dream that means nothing this is love, and love is life made irresistible

BRUNO [*carried away*] Life yes this is life,

and this [*he kisses her eyes*], and this [*he kisses her lips*] What a fool I was with my non-resolutions! one throb of your breast, one touch of your lips; and where are they? Nothing matters but Jitta, Jitta, Jitta [*he kisses her again and again*] I am neither weak nor afraid now, and I promise you to live a hundred years.

JITTA All the unhappinesses are forgotten they never existed [*She turns him round and draws him towards the bedroom*] Come

BRUNO [*beside himself*] You trust me, and I must betray you You thought me a young man, and I let you think so But you shall not be deceived You have made me as young as I seemed to you [*He seizes her round the hips, and lifts her up exultantly*]

JITTA [*terrified*] Oh God, no take care, Bruno take care

BRUNO [*setting her down gaily*] Bah! Do I love you?

JITTA Yes, yes You love me I love you Come

BRUNO [*pushing her towards the bedroom door*] Quick, quick

JITTA [*running into the bedroom*] Yes, yes, yes

BRUNO [*with a grim change of countenance*] Poor Jitta! That lift broke the mainspring [*He staggers against the door frame, clutches at the wall to save himself, strikes the electric light out by chance, reels back into the middle of the room, and drops dead*]

JITTA [*running in she has begun to undress*] What is the matter? Where are you? [*She stumbles against the body*] Oh God! [*She switches on the light*] Bruno [*She rushes to him and kneels by him*] Bruno speak to me if you can—is it your heart again? What can I do for you? Shall I try to lift you?

She tries to raise him by his shoulders, but they are too heavy She puts her hands round his neck and pulls it up from the floor, but the back of his head remains hanging and his jaw drops With a gasp of horror she replaces the head and closes the open mouth Then she scrambles to her feet and runs to the other door, calling breathlessly and voicelessly Mrs Bilhter, Mrs Bilhter She opens the door, and regaining her voice, cries Mrs— She checks herself, suddenly remembering the consequences to herself of being found with the body She closes the door quickly and noiselessly She tries to think, her strained senses shewing in her eyes. Her fingers clutch for a moment at her half-naked breast as she thinks of her disordered appearance She dashes into

the bedroom, and reappears almost immediately with her blouse on, arranging it with nervous hands She puts on her hat and mantle anyhow As she turns to rush to the door the hat falls off With a little cry of misery she takes the hat-pins from the hat and pins it properly to her hair, then she looks at herself in the mirror and shakes her mantle straight She turns, and is hurrying to the door when she finds the body in her way A flush of remorse comes over her She turns impulsively to the vase, takes out a handful of roses, and is stooping to lay them on his breast when she realizes that a man who drops dead cannot scatter flowers on himself She shakes her head and puts the roses back, puts her hands distractedly to her head in an anguish of perplexity, feeling that she must not leave him without some ceremony of love There is only one thing that comes into her mind that will not compromise her She goes to him, and cannot touch him or kiss him, but she makes the sign of the cross over him; kisses her hand, crosses herself, and hurries out, closing the door very softly behind her.

ACT II

A week has elapsed Bruno is buried, and his death from natural causes duly certified Jitta has taken refuge in an illness, and is keeping her bed Her husband, Professor Alfred Lenkheim, is sitting in his study after lunch with young Dr Fessler, who is engaged to Bruno's daughter Edith Alfred lacks the distinction and heroic touch of Bruno, but prosaic as he certainly is, he is saved from being common, if not from being a little comic, by the stamp put upon him as a man of learning by his university training and his professorial Chair His age is between forty and fifty Fessler is just an ordinary nice-looking young doctor

The room has two doors, one, in the middle of the wall behind the two men, opening on the corridor, the other, on their left, leading to an inner room The window faces the inner door from the opposite side; and there is a window-seat before it At right angles to this window-seat, further up the room, is a sofa There are two tables one a writing-table on the side near the window, at which the professor is sitting, and the other a round table on the side near the inner door There is a chair at it with its back to the wall in which the entrance door is, and another, in which Dr Fessler is sitting, between it and the writing-table The walls are crowded with book-shelves, and the writing-table is heaped

with examination papers and manuscripts

LENKHEIM Whats the matter? Going asleep at your age! You were not called up last night, were you?

FESSLER No But, by Jimminy, Lenkheim, I have gone through a lot this last week.

LENKHEIM How?

FESSLER Just consider Imagine having to console Bruno's widow when I'm engaged to his daughter!

LENKHEIM Why not?

FESSLER Because theyre at daggers drawn Every word that soothes old Agnes is an outrage to Edith

LENKHEIM Why? Whats wrong between them?

FESSLER. Oh, Mrs Haldenstedt is old-fashioned She keeps up the convention that because Edith is a young unmarried woman she cant possibly understand about her father's death, and Edith has to pretend to be in the dark. But of course she knows as well as you or I, and it maddens her to have to hold her tongue and be treated like a child when all her feelings are boiling over about it She was very fond of her father

LENKHEIM I knew the mother and daughter never got on very well together—jealousy, I suppose, as usual—but I thought this awful business would have brought them together

FESSLER Not a bit It has set them more against one another than ever

LENKHEIM I suppose theyve no notion who the woman was?

FESSLER None She will never be found out unless she comes forward herself

LENKHEIM She wont do that Why should she give herself away?

FESSLER. Women do, sometimes, God knows why! But meanwhile, poor Mrs Haldenstedt is most frightfully cut up There she is, distracted by all sorts of surmises and suspicions, not knowing what to think, asking herself every minute whether he went on the loose and died in a vulgar street adventure, or whether there was somebody all along whom she never suspected, making her marriage a mockery We are all as much in the dark as she is, for there never was a word against him he seemed the correctest, most domesticated of men That is, unless you know anything You were so intimate with him, you know

LENKHEIM Was I really intimate with him? Certainly we were friends at college, and we

kept it up afterwards But he never told me much about himself

FESSLER He was not that sort of man But he trusted nobody in the world as he trusted you the widow is dead certain of that By the way, she asked me to prepare you for a visit she is going to pay you

LENKHEIM Why should you prepare me?

FESSLER Well, she is going to ask you to act as his scientific and literary executor

LENKHEIM [*pleasantly surprised and suddenly self-conscious*] Really! Of course I shall be delighted I may tell you that in my own will I made him my literary executor Who would have thought that he would peg out first?

FESSLER But didnt you know that he was ill?

LENKHEIM Oh, I knew about his heart and so forth But many a patient with heart disease lives to bury his doctor As a matter of fact his case was not a very serious one His heart would not have stood racing up two or three flights of stairs But does any man of his age race upstairs? A very strong emotion or excitement might have killed him, but a settled married man with a wife and a grown-up daughter suffers more from too little excitement than from too much What emotions has a domesticated man of science to fear after forty?

FESSLER Then why did he die?

LENKHEIM Just so why did he die? He wouldnt have died if he had been leading the quiet life we all gave him credit for What sort of life did he really lead? That is the question

FESSLER Isnt it shocking that such a man should die under such—such—well, such shady circumstances?

LENKHEIM Shady! I should call them disgraceful. Yes, my dear boy, we must face it he came to a disgraceful end An operatic tenor, or even a literary man, might be forgiven for dying in an adventure of that kind But a man of science! Unfortunate, to say the least most unfortunate

FESSLER. At all events, since it was his luck to die in the dark, we are not called on to light the candle, are we?

LENKHEIM We are not, but what about the police? And what about his wife?

FESSLER They havnt the ghost of a clue

LENKHEIM It wont upset or delay your engagement, I hope Not that I could blame you if you broke it off Still—

FESSLER *I break it off!* Good gracious, no!

LENKHEIM I'm glad of that. Of course you must keep it up to Edith that there was nothing wrong.

FESSLER But she won't have it that there was nothing wrong.

LENKHEIM What!

FESSLER You see, she adored her father. She sees him with a halo round his head, and nothing that he could do would be wrong for her. She has always felt that her mother could not live up to him; and she is persuading herself that this unknown woman was some wonderful person who made him as happy as she thinks he deserved to be.

LENKHEIM That's funny. Very funny. Does she suspect anybody?

FESSLER I don't know. I can't see through her; and the worst of it is, she can see through me. She will find out what I think.

LENKHEIM Which is?

FESSLER Well, just what you think. And when she finds out what that is, heaven help me!

LENKHEIM She won't find out. All that a young girl sees in a death is the romance of it. The vulgar reality does not exist for her. What an eye-opener for us who know better! [*Sententiously*] And yet, whatever view we may take of the affair, we must admit that these moral problems are very difficult in fact, insoluble. Is there any man who can say that he has never been in a position in which sudden death would have been extremely embarrassing?

FESSLER I suppose not. [*Nervely*] By the way, that reminds me that I forgot to ask how Mrs Lenkheim is.

LENKHEIM Oh, Jitta is getting over it. She hopes to be able to get up for a couple of hours today. Just in a dressing-gown, you know, to sit about a bit.

FESSLER Oh, good. Well, I must be off to the hospital. [*He rises*] Tell her I asked after her.

LENKHEIM [*Rising*] I will. How soon do you think I may expect the Haldenstedts?

FESSLER Any time now, I should think. The old girl won't be easy until she has seen you.

Lenkheim goes out for a moment through the inner door. Jitta comes in, languid, and dressed as Lenkheim has described.

JITTA Oh, so glad you've come, Doctor. [*She shakes hands with Fessler*] Have you seen the Haldenstedts? I was so sorry not to be able to call on them. I have been really

too ill. I hope they know that.

FESSLER [*With affectionate deference*] They thoroughly understand that. You must take the greatest care of yourself.

JITTA You are not running away, are you?

FESSLER I must. I have to be at the hospital; and I am late already.

JITTA Come again soon, Doctor.

FESSLER, I hope to find you quite well then, dear lady.

He kisses her hand, and goes out. When he has gone, Lenkheim returns, full of excitement and curiosity.

LENKHEIM Jitta old Agnes is coming to see us. Bruno has made me his literary executor. That is what she is coming about.

JITTA Has she recovered enough to bear discussing it with you?

LENKHEIM She must. The world doesn't stand still when people die. I wonder what we shall find in his papers!

JITTA [*Going white*] Has she found anything?

LENKHEIM Yes. Didn't I tell you? He has made me his scientific and literary executor.

JITTA I mean about—about—

LENKHEIM About his death? Absolutely nothing. Fessler has just told me so.

JITTA [*Sitting down at the table, reassured*] Poor Fessler!

LENKHEIM [*Resuming his seat at his writing-table*] Yes, poor chap. He is rather in a fright about Edith.

JITTA Why?

LENKHEIM He is afraid that her grief for her father will kill her feeling for him, so you'd better take Edith in hand. You know how she clings to you. She is like her father in that. He clung to you.

JITTA To me!

LENKHEIM Yes, you know very well. He did. If I had died you would have been up before this, I expect.

JITTA Alfred, if you begin nagging I shall have to go back to bed.

LENKHEIM Who's nagging? [*She rises. He jumps up apprehensively*] There now, for God's sake don't make a scene about nothing. All I meant was that if he ever told anything to anybody he would have told it to you. [*She sits down again*] Jitta, have you really no suspicion?

JITTA Of what?

LENKHEIM Who the woman was.

JITTA How could he tell anyone who she was? It would have been dishonorable to

betray her

LENKHEIM Men do tell, all the same They dont tell the newspapers, but they tell other women

JITTA I object to be classed with "other women"

LENKHEIM Oh well, it's no use talking to you if you will be so touchy I didnt suggest that he told you you brought that in yourself All that was in my mind was that as you were so much in and out of his house you must have met her one time or another if she was the wife of any of his friends It usually is a friend's wife

JITTA [*with affected listlessness*] Is it?

LENKHEIM Well, it stands to reason, doesnt it? Unless it's a chance woman from the streets

JITTA [*wincing*] I suppose so

LENKHEIM Did he never talk to you about love, or anything of that sort?

JITTA The last time we were at the theatre he discussed the play with me It was a play about love

LENKHEIM Well, what else would a play be about? Thats no clue I wonder was she a patient of his?

JITTA Does it matter? Need we gossip about it?

LENKHEIM [*impatiently*] Dont be so superior I like gossip Everybody likes gossip You like it yourself as well as anybody If she was a patient that would account for his being so reserved about her

JITTA. Alfred you are unbearable I will go back to bed.

She rises and makes for the door, but is checked by the entrance of Agnes Haldenstedt and her daughter, both in deep mourning Agnes carries a small dispatch case She is not really much older than Jitta, but she has retired so completely from the competition of women in attractiveness, and accepted so fully her lot as a good bourgeoisie with a home to keep and a family to manage on a slender income that she is set down as much older and less distinguished socially Her sense of duty has kept her upright, and her uprightness has given her a certain authority, as of a person of some consequence She has been deeply wounded by the circumstances of her husband's death, and is stiff and suspicious in her manner

Her daughter is young and ingenuous, with a strong character A passion of grief for her father has set her on fire with pride and a sense of being ready for any sacrifice

The conversation which ensues is solemn, artificial, and constrained They condole with one another in low tones and unnaturally bookish sentences Jitta has to draw the girl to her, and kiss her on the brow Alfred leads Mrs Haldenstedt to the sofa When she sits down, he sits on the window-seat near her Jitta leads Edith to the chair she has just vacated, and goes to the sofa, where she seats herself on the widow's left

All these movements are ridiculous, yet the mourning worn by the two visitors makes them seem, if not natural, at least becoming

LENKHEIM [*in hollow tones*] May I say again, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, how deeply I—

JITTA [*gushing*] At last, dearest Mrs Haldenstedt, I am able to tell you what I felt when I lay helpless, unable to pay the last respects to our dear lost friend [*As she sits down, she seizes the hands of Mrs Haldenstedt, giving her no opportunity of refusing the attention*] But in my sick room I was with you in spirit Indeed I have never been closer to you and poor Edith than in that moment when I had to ask my husband to tell you what it cost me to stay away

AGNES [*not at all disposed to allow Jitta so prominent a share in her grief, but conventionally resorting to her handkerchief*] Thank you I'm sure it's very kind of you

LENKHEIM [*clearing his throat and sniffing*] Under such a sudden blow, what can we say? We are all struck dumb We all share your grief

AGNES When people are sick, and we can sacrifice ourselves completely to the duty of nursing them when they can lean on us to the very last, then, when the parting comes, there is some consolation in the thought that we have done all in our power But an end like this, so sudden, so dreadful— [*she breaks down*]

LENKHEIM [*making the best of it*] Still, I am not sure that a lingering death really spares the feelings of the survivors Death often tortures its victims before it strikes the final blow In your case, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, there was at least no torture

AGNES [*staring at him*] No torture! What has the future for me but the torture of a widow's grief?

EDITH [*unsympathetic*] It has the honor of father's name Is that nothing?

LENKHEIM [*effusively*] Which I will help you both to uphold, my dear Edith, believe me

AGNES He knew he could depend on you

I have a packet of papers marked "Professor Lenkheim's property to be given into his own hands" that is why I have come today instead of waiting for Mrs Lenkheim to call

LENKHEIM Dear fellow how conscientious of him! such papers as he had of mine were of no consequence. Shall we have a little quiet talk all to ourselves, in here? [*He rises and crosses the room, inviting her, by a gesture, to come with him through the door opposite the window*]

AGNES [*pausing between Jitta and Edith*] I wanted to come alone but Edith insisted on coming with me

LENKHEIM She was quite right She is now your only support

EDITH [*proudly*] Thank you, Professor I wish you could persuade my mother that I could do much more for her if she would tell me all her troubles I am no longer a child There is nothing now that cannot be spoken of quite frankly before me

AGNES [*with a weary smile*] Of course not, dear But there are things it is better not to know I know them, and I only wish I could change places with you.

Emphasizing this with an emphatic nod at Edith, she goes into the next room Lenkheim follows her

JITTA [*throwing off her false manner, whilst retaining the patronizing suavity of an older woman to a younger one, holds out her hands to Edith with genuine sympathy*] Come, darling [*Edith comes to her and takes her hands*] Sit here, close to me [*She makes room for her on the sofa beside her Edith sits down on her left, and looks gratefully and longingly into her eyes*] Do you remember when we were last here together? Your father brought you He was radiant with joy and pride in you We were all so happy

EDITH [*thoughtfully*] How long was that ago?

JITTA Barely three weeks

EDITH It seems an age. I was a child then I can hardly remember how I felt. It is as if I had been asleep

JITTA Your father's death has awakened you you are looking at life for the first time

EDITH. I have been looking at death for the first time

JITTA. My poor child! But dont lose courage Life lies before you it will make up to you for many sorrows You will get over it, Edith

EDITH Why should I get over it? I dont want to get over it Do you suppose I feel

disgraced?

JITTA Oh no, no: of course not But such a grief as this always makes us feel that we have come to the end of everything that nothing can ever be the same again Yet next day we find ourselves at the beginning of everything instead

EDITH [*impatient*] You need not speak to me like that You know very well that what is the matter is not merely the loss of a father a thing that happens to everybody sooner or later.

JITTA [*taken aback*] Edith, dear—

EDITH [*downright and indignant*] Why do you treat me as if I were a little girl, as my mother does? I did not expect it from you Oh, I am so tired of all this humbug I turned to you because I hoped you would understand me, and let me open my heart to you like a friend

JITTA My dear I will be an elder sister to you—

EDITH [*fiercely*] I said a friend

JITTA [*surrendering*] Oh, you are terrible. I will be everything you want, if I can But why are you angry with me? I really meant what I said Life has a great deal to offer you dont forget that you are going to be married I believe you can trust your man He adored your father. He will regard you as a sacred legacy

EDITH. Thats curious He used that word himself the day we buried poor papa But I dont intend to be taken as a legacy, sacred or not

JITTA Edith he feels your loss as deeply as you do yourself Some of us perhaps feel it more deeply, because we have more experience of men, and know how much better what he was than you are yet old enough to know

EDITH [*rising and pacing restlessly across the room*] Oh, these commonplaces! How you keep throwing them at me! None of us know what my father was. he was thrown away among us [*Turning on Jitta*] Why did he not die with us? Why had he no last word for us? I was nothing to him none of us were anything to him

JITTA. You know, dear, that you are unjust to him when you say so.

EDITH Unjust! unjust! what has that to do with it? Why did he not come to us for help, for nursing, for care?

JITTA He was too considerate to let you

know how ill he was

EDITH He told everyone else We were left in the dark

JITTA No, no No one knew it except himself

EDITH [*passionately*] My mother wont speak to me about it, but I know very well what she is thinking They whisper all day at home I see it in the eyes of the visitors, and it makes me furious I never want to see anyone cry again as my mother cried that night when they brought him home It wasnt only grief there was a bitterness in her that had nothing to do with grief or love I have often felt in my soul that papa never found in his home what he needed and longed for There were moments when I somehow got beyond myself and became another person, perhaps the woman I am growing into, and he was so responsive to that flash of something different in me, so grateful for it, that I saw quite plainly how he was longing for something else, something more, than we were giving him We were not good enough for him [*She throws herself into the chair beside the round table, sobbing*]

JITTA [*rising and going to her*] Dearest dont cry like that

EDITH It nearly killed me to see him sitting there, as he often did, staring right through me without seeing me, and sighing as he drew his hand across his eyes and through his hair

JITTA Dear child you must not worry yourself because he sometimes looked straight at you and did not see you Just think He was a doctor he knew his danger better than anyone When a man finds himself condemned to death, his thoughts and feelings must be overwhelming Well, if you were looking at the sea in a storm or at the heavens opening above it, would you see a tiny figure on the shore, even if it were your own child?

EDITH [*rising in a girlish rapture*] Thank you for that it is beautiful, and quite true [*She closes her eyes, silent for a moment, and a little breathless Jitta smiles, and sits down in the writing-table chair*] And now, wont you help me to find out the secret of his death?

JITTA What secret?

EDITH Who is the woman in whose arms my father died?

JITTA [*startled*] So that is what you think! Poor child!

EDITH [*angry*] I do not think it I know it You know it Please let us have no more of the poor child business it does not impose on me How am I to find her?

JITTA [*remonstrating*] Edith, Edith, what could you say to her, even if you found her?

EDITH Only that I love her

JITTA Love her! What for?

EDITH For making my father happy [*Restless again, pacing up and down*] Oh, if you knew how infamously all those people who call on us misunderstand him They insult my mother by condoling with her on her husband's unfaithfulness They insult God by declaring that my father threw himself into the gutter, and was justly punished for it

JITTA [*springing up*] What! They dare say such brutal things!

EDITH Oh, not in those words they are too polite to speak as horribly as they think, but I know And my mother encourages them She actually likes to feel that some unheard-of disgrace has fallen on her She thinks it makes her interesting and revenges her She positively wallows in it

JITTA [*shocked*] Edith!

EDITH Oh, it is the right word for it why should I not use it? She never thinks of his sorrows only of her own

JITTA [*taking her arm persuasively*] My dear you mustnt go on like this Come let me talk to you quietly [*She draws her back to the sofa, and makes her sit down again*] If you loved your mother as you loved your father, you would be kinder to her You think of him as a man whose wife has failed him Dont forget that she is a woman whose husband failed her

EDITH How did he fail her? If she had been worthy of him—

JITTA Yes, yes, dear, but she was not worthy of him Or stop no we have no right to say that

EDITH We have a right to say that she was not the right woman for him

JITTA Yes, but dont forget that that means that he was not the right man for her He was her superior if you like, but that only made it worse for her His superiority must often have wounded her self-respect, and as any weakness of his flattered it, she perhaps likes to think that he was not quite perfect, and even that he treated her badly

EDITH You think that an excuse for her!

I call it abominable

JITTA Dont be impossible, dear Abominable or not, it explains her readiness to believe the worst You must not blame her because your faith in him is greater, and your consolation nobler. Remember he did not betray you as he betrayed her For he did betray her, and so did that woman Tell yourself that, Edith, whenever you feel tempted to hate your mother. Promise me you will

EDITH I will never tell myself such a silly lie I will take my father's memory and good name out of my mother's hands, and out of the hands of her tittle-tattling friends I will make the world see him as he was, and as I loved him, not as she sees him, and as she hates him

JITTA The world will see him with its own eyes, dear, not with yours. All you can do is to save his memory from being blackened by that odious thing, a family quarrel Come! promise me to stop worrying about your mother?

EDITH I am not worrying about her: I am worrying about the woman my father loved I cannot help it she is always in my mind Why was she not with him when they found him? Why did she run away like a criminal?

JITTA Perhaps she is asking herself those questions every day in her shame and misery Oh, Edith, we dont know what meannesses we are capable of until we are tried The dread of a public scandal—of having to face a policeman prying into the most sacred and secret places in her soul—will drive a woman to anything Remember she had not only to save herself from the scandal, but his memory as well

EDITH No, no, no She did not save him. She left him under the stigma of having died in the arms of some vile creature I know in my soul that she was not that The world would forgive him if it knew that she is what I know she must be if he loved her Oh, why does she not defy all the silly world for his sake, and say "It was I"

JITTA You ask too much from her She may have been capable of great things when he was alive and at her side What is the poor wretch now but a broken-hearted lonely coward?

EDITH She is not broken-hearted my father never broke any woman's heart. I loved him, and that makes even his death a

glory to me If she is lonely why does she not come to me? She shall come to me We shall cure one another's loneliness, we two Where is she to cry her heart out if not in my arms?

JITTA No. she slunk away into the darkness Let her be She can bleed to death in her hiding-place.

EDITH She shall not she will be drawn to me you will see Remember that I have no longer any place at home I cannot live with people who cannot feel about my father as I do, and there is only one such person in the world

JITTA That woman?

EDITH Yes I will give her every right over me that the woman who returned my father's love should have over his daughter the right I deny to my mother I swear it

JITTA How serious you are, Edith! But what will your mother say, and the man you are engaged to?

EDITH My mother would never understand I take nothing from her that she is capable of missing As to the man who says he loves me, and asks me to share my whole life with him, if he cannot understand me and support me in this he will never have me for a wife I can do without any man if I can find the woman to whom I am bound for ever and ever. You will help me to find her, will you not?

JITTA [*deeply moved, drawing Edith to her*] Oh, darling, darling, if only I could! If only I dared!

Lenkheim throws the door open: he is returning with Agnes Jitta and Edith move asunder and rise hastily Agnes comes in, drying her eyes with her handkerchief Lenkheim follows her solemnly with her dispatch case in his hand

EDITH [*stamping*] Oh, bother! Always at the wrong moment Always spoiling everything [*She turns impatiently to the window, and stands with her back to them, fuming*]

AGNES [*to Alfred*] Thank God I found strength for this It is a great relief to me But I am dead tired I must go home [*To Edith*] Come, child

JITTA Wont you sit down and rest for a moment?

AGNES Thank you; but I shall be better at home And I have so many accounts to settle.

LENKHEIM Ah, yes, yes. of course you have Well, if you must go, you must. And you may depend on me not to keep you waiting too long before I go to work on the scientific

papers

JITTA I hope to be allowed to go out again in a day or two May I come to see you if the doctor says I may?

AGNES Do, of course I shall expect you [*To Lenkheim*] You will forgive me, wont you, all the trouble I am giving you? It has done me so much good to unburden myself to a real friend

LENKHEIM You have had a cruel experience, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, but we must all resign ourselves to our trials

AGNES Yes I suppose that is a great consolation

EDITH My consolation is that nobody dares console me

ALFRED [*pompously*] Proud words, and how true! how true! [*Unctuously, as he shakes her hand*] Goodbye, dear lady, good-bye

AGNES Goodbye [*To Edith, laughing a little maliciously*] Since you are so strong, child, just give me your arm

JITTA [*shaking hands*] Goodbye
Edith goes out with her mother leaning heavily on her Jitta goes out with them

LENKHEIM [*relieved at being rid of the widow*] Ouf! [*He carries the dispatch case to his writing-table, and sits down to examine its contents He is in no hurry It contains nothing but the manuscript of a biggish book He leans lazily back with his legs stretched, and turns over the cover without looking at it He reads a bit, and makes a wry face He disagrees intensely and contemptuously with every passage he reads, abandoning each with sniffs and pushes, only to be still more disgusted with the next*

Jitta returns, sees what he is doing, and halts between him and the round table, silently watching him

Finally he gives the book up as hopeless, shuts up the pages, and stares at the mass of manuscript as if wondering what he is to do with such trash Suddenly his expression changes His eyes bulge in amazement

ALFRED [*after a stifled exclamation*] Jitta! Jitta! [*He turns, half rising, and sees her*] Oh, you're there

JITTA What is the matter? [*knowing only too well, and very angry at his contemptuous air, but pretending to be listless and languid*]

LENKHEIM [*showing her the manuscript*] Look at this!

JITTA Well?

LENKHEIM Look at the title

JITTA [*reading*] "Fetters of the Feminine

Psyche" Is that the book you worked on with him?

LENKHEIM I! Certainly not he wrote it all himself I only gave him his facts Read the next line

JITTA [*reading*] "By Alfred Lenkheim" I suppose he meant you to finish it

LENKHEIM [*turning over to the end*] But it is finished. Look Was he mad? Did he suppose I would condescend to put my name to another man's work? I have some reputation of my own to fall back on, thank God There is something behind this

JITTA I suppose he wished to leave you something valuable as a keepsake You were his friend.

LENKHEIM [*scornfully*] A keepsake! Dont talk nonsense, Jitta a man does not give away his biggest work as if it were his diamond pin, unless he is afraid to put his own name to it But if he thinks he is going to put mine to his trash he is greatly mistaken.

JITTA [*boiling with rage, pointing to the manuscript*] He has sacrificed his immortality for your benefit

LENKHEIM [*angrily*] Rot Why should he? Nobody who can create sacrifices his creation [*He throws the manuscript on the table*] Not that he ever pretended to think much of the book

JITTA [*indignantly*] He thought the world of it It was his greatest pride

LENKHEIM [*turning on her, a suspicion flashing on him*] How do you know?

JITTA [*checking herself, feeling that her temper has betrayed her*] He often spoke to me about this book, and about the hopes he had built on it

LENKHEIM To you! What do you know about psychiatry? Why should he sacrifice his reputation to add to mine? quite unnecessarily

JITTA The whim of an invalid, I suppose
LENKHEIM [*out of patience*] Whim! He throws away his one chance of notoriety, and you call that a whim Do you take me for a fool?

JITTA Dont shout, Alfred, please

ALFRED [*subsiding a little*] I'm not shouting I'm asking you to talk sense You say he spoke to you about this What did he tell you?

JITTA Of course I knew too little of the work you and he were doing together to be able to help or understand much [*Decisively*] But in any case you must carry out his

wishes

LENKHEIM What wishes?

JITTA You must accept what he has left you

LENKHEIM Why must I?

JITTA It was his last wish: we have no choice.

LENKHEIM We! Me, you mean. What have you to do with it?

JITTA. Well, you if you like.

LENKHEIM It's not me you're thinking of. Funny, the way women run after a dead man if only he dies romantically! Anyhow this thing is impossible. I won't do it.

JITTA Why?

LENKHEIM Because it would be nothing short of swindling the scientific world to pass off his stuff on it as mine. That's why. And now, what the deuce am I to say to old Agnes? [Grumbling] Such an unreasonable thing to ask me to do! Such an ungrateful thing!

JITTA Was it ungrateful to give you the whole credit when you were only his collaborator?

LENKHEIM Collaborator! What are you talking about? He knew as well as I did that I was only waiting for the publication of his idiotic theory to tear it to pieces. You don't suppose I believe in it, do you?

JITTA. Then perhaps that was what he wanted to prevent.

LENKHEIM Jitta, you are simply drivelling. Bruno was too jolly conceited to be afraid of me. Don't be childish.

JITTA [irritably] I am like yourself. I am only trying to guess why he did it.

LENKHEIM Just so. Why did he do it? Where is the sense in it? I believe you know, Jitta.

JITTA Really, Alfred—! I must go back to bed.

LENKHEIM You haven't been up an hour.

JITTA But I am dead tired.

LENKHEIM. You can't be as tired as all that. What do you want to run away for?

JITTA Have you forgotten that I am ill? I can hardly stand. I must lie down.

ALFRED Well, lie on the sofa.

JITTA Don't be brutal, Alfred.

LENKHEIM Bosh! You are hiding something from me. I haven't experimented with psycho-analysis for nothing. I notice that this crazy thing that bothers me doesn't bother you. You understand it, you couldn't take it so quietly if you didn't.

JITTA I take it without shouting, if that is what you mean.

LENKHEIM What did he say to you about the book and about his hopes? Why did you never say a word about them to me?

JITTA I never thought about it.

LENKHEIM If you had never thought about it you would have talked to me about it.

JITTA I suppose I did not think it worth mentioning.

LENKHEIM Psha! Would a man who told you all that not tell you plenty of other things? That love affair, now—?

JITTA [shrinking] Oh, Alfred!

LENKHEIM Oh, stuff! Who was the woman? You know all about her. I can see it in your eyes [He takes her by the shoulders and turns her face to face] Aha! You know who she was. You know all about it.

JITTA [rising indignantly and letting herself go] You are mad, and grossly rude.

LENKHEIM [rising also] I have had enough of being humbugged. Who was she?

JITTA [closes her lips obstinately]!

LENKHEIM Was he so much to you that you will not give the other woman away, even to me, your husband? Were those his orders?

JITTA [exhausted] I have no orders. I go my own way [she attempts to leave the room].

LENKHEIM [intercepting her] You shan't run away. If you don't tell me who she is, I will—I will—[he makes a threatening gesture, not very convincingly].

JITTA Take care, Alfred. Your cunning is only a fool's cunning after all. The answer to your question is staring you in the face. Thank your stars you are too stupid to see it.

LENKHEIM Am I? We shall see. Before you leave this room I will find out the part you played in this dirty business.

JITTA [starting as from the lash of a whip] Dirty! Oh, never was anything purer, holier, nobler.

LENKHEIM [screaming] Ah! It was you! There was no other woman. It was you, you. He bought you from me, for that [he bangs his fist on the manuscript]. The damned thief! [He collapses into his chair at the table, clasping his head in his hands].

JITTA [sitting down wearily on the sofa] Leave the dead in peace. If you cannot hold your tongue, abuse me. I am alive, and can feel it.

LENKHEIM [miserably] You don't even deny it!

JITTA No Are you surprised? You lost me long ago

LENKHEIM My fault, of course You worthless devil what do you expect me to think of you?

JITTA You can think what you like, Alfred I dont grudge you that melancholy satisfaction

LENKHEIM Have you no conscience, no shame?

JITTA Do you want me to make a scene for you, Alfred? I am sorry I am too tired

LENKHEIM If I had him here—

JITTA Threaten him to your heart's content He is dead

ALFRED Yes, but I am very much alive Dont forget that

JITTA Not so very much alive, Alfred

ALFRED Yah [*gnashes his teeth with rage*]

JITTA However, what I enjoyed I shall have to pay for I know that

LENKHEIM You and he were lovers?

JITTA [*proudly*] Yes you have found the right word at last Lovers

LENKHEIM [*whining pitably*] And you could live in the house with me, and take my care and my nursing and my money, and even— [*He looks at her and chokes*] How long has this affair been going on?

JITTA Our love has lasted three years

LENKHEIM Love! Love in the sort of house he was found dead in!

JITTA Love wherever we were And wherever we were was paradise Does that give you any idea of his greatness?

LENKHEIM Of your meanness, more likely Dont try to stuff me with big words they only shew that you wont confess your caddishness even to yourself

JITTA [*rising*] Oh, please! I cut a pretty contemptible figure—

LENKHEIM [*triumphing*] You do You do

JITTA [*continuing*]—beside him

LENKHEIM [*rising, goaded beyond endurance threatening her*] You take care, do you hear?

JITTA [*wringing her hands*] My place was at his side They should have had to tear me away from him by force Yes, and I will tell you something more The last beat of his heart would have broken mine if I had been any good But I am no good, and here I am, as you see me Oh, you are quite right I have no right to be in any decent house [*she turns to the door*]

LENKHEIM Stop where are you going?

JITTA I dont know Into the streets, I suppose

LENKHEIM Oh, damn your heroics! You shant leave this room until you have told me everything

JITTA [*butterfly*] Dont you know enough already?

LENKHEIM [*pointing to the manuscript*] What does that title-page mean?

JITTA You know You have said what it means

LENKHEIM I want to know what he said

JITTA That you are to be the father to his orphaned book That the fame it will bring you will make amends to you—for me

LENKHEIM The blackguard! Not content with stealing you from me, he must dictate the rest of my life to me, as if I were a child

JITTA Yes compared to him you are a child He has provided for you

LENKHEIM Ha! And were you equally kind and thoughtful for his wife, eh?

JITTA [*earnestly*] Alfred it was too strong for us

LENKHEIM What was too strong for you?

JITTA Love You dont understand love Have you anything else to say to me?

LENKHEIM No [*He turns his back on her, and goes sulkily to the window*]

JITTA Goodbye [*She tries to go, but suddenly becomes weak, and reels against the head of the sofa*] Alfred.

LENKHEIM Whats the matter? [*He runs to her, and gets her safely seated*]

JITTA Dont mind, Alfred I shall be better soon it is passing

LENKHEIM [*turning brusquely from her like an angry child*] I am not sympathizing with you It serves you right [*He sits down at the round table, with his elbows on it, muttering and sulking*] Treated me disgracefully Disgracefully

JITTA [*sighs wearily*]!

LENKHEIM [*unaggressively*] Jitta?

Her name and the change in his tone give her a shock She turns and looks searchingly at him

LENKHEIM [*recovering his self-control by a rather broken effort*] This is no use I have come to my senses I—I will take it quietly and reasonably

JITTA I am glad you can I wish I could

LENKHEIM [*shaking his head*] But we cant leave it like this, can we?

JITTA What can we do, Alfred?

LENKHEIM You have done me harm

enough. Do you want to ruin me as well?

JITTA. It is I who am ruined, as you call it, is it not? The sin is mine I will pay the penalty by myself Your life is only beginning with that book you have a future I have only a past I will take it and myself out of your life [*She rises*]

LENKHEIM [*out of patience, jumping up*] Look here: since you wont talk sense and be commonly civil to me, I'm going to assert myself You cant settle an affair like this by looking like a martyr and walking out into the street You must learn to consider other people a little If you have no regard for me, at least remember that Agnes and Edith have a future, and have a right not to have it spoiled For their sake I am prepared to endure your presence in my house

JITTA [*with faint surprise and some irony*] You can bring yourself to that? You can still bear to look at me?

LENKHEIM Make no mistake all is over between you and me. For ever I mean it

JITTA So do I

LENKHEIM Very well. be it so But that does not mean that we need separate People can live miles apart under the same roof That is how you will have to live with me If you have a spark of decent feeling left, you will not force a public scandal on me

JITTA Does it matter?

LENKHEIM. Does it matter! Are you utterly selfish? Dont you understand that if this miserable break-up of our marriage becomes known it will break up that poor woman's widowhood as well?

JITTA Does she matter so much?

LENKHEIM [*playing his ace*] Well, what about Edith? Doesnt she matter? Do you suppose Fessler can afford to marry her if you drag her family through the mud?

JITTA [*staggered*] Oh! I was not thinking, Alfred Give me until tomorrow to think it over I can bear no more today. I can hardly stand

LENKHEIM You can stand as well as I can [*She immediately sits down obstinately at the writing-table*] Very well, but stand or sit, you dont leave this room until you give me your word to stay

JITTA With you?

LENKHEIM Yes, with me It is I who will have to pay the housekeeping bills But dont be afraid I am done with you, except before company Not one word will I ever speak to

you again when we are alone together

JITTA Oh, Alfred, you will tell me so ten times a day Dont let us talk nonsense

LENKHEIM You will see Not one word Not a sound I tell you I am done with you; and I wish I had never met you.

JITTA It sounds too good to be true, Alfred

LENKHEIM Psha!

JITTA But that part of it rests with yourself [*Determinedly*] And now for my conditions

LENKHEIM Your conditions! Yours!! You dare talk to me of conditions!

JITTA. You are in my hands, Alfred, and you know it I can give the whole scandal away if you defy me. I will not be unkind, but if I am to keep up appearances, you must keep them up too If I am to pretend to be a good woman, you must pretend to be a great man

LENKHEIM Pretend!

JITTA Oh, be a great man by all means, Alfred, if you can But you must pretend in any case

LENKHEIM How?

JITTA. You will pretend to be the author of that great book. That will be your share of the sham of our life together

LENKHEIM But I tell you I dont believe a word of the silly thing

JITTA. Of course not If you had the genius to believe it, you would have had the genius to write it

LENKHEIM [*goaded*] I—

JITTA [*continuing calmly*] You cannot believe it, just as I cannot believe that you will never speak to me again,—

LENKHEIM I never will

JITTA [*still ignoring his protests*] —but you will come to believe every word of the silly thing, as you call it, when it makes Lenkheim as famous as Einstein

LENKHEIM [*startled by the name*] Einstein! You are tempting me, you devil

JITTA. You envied Einstein, Alfred Well, all that you envied him for is within your reach Stretch out your hand, and take it

LENKHEIM And you envied Einstein's wife, did you? I see Why could not your stupid husband give you a triumphant tour through Europe? Why should you not shake hands with all the kings, and dine with all the presidents, and have gala nights at the Opera? To get all that you will be my accomplice in a fraud, eh? Since you cannot

have a good time with him you will have one with me

JITTA [*round-eyed for a moment at this new light on her conduct*] How clever of you, Alfred! You have found a reason you can really believe in I should never have thought of it, but you are welcome to it if only you will father his book

LENKHEIM [*desperately perplexed yielding*] But, Jitta I dont really believe that It's not like you you are not clever enough, not ambitious enough What is your real reason?

JITTA [*decisively*] He wished it that is enough for me He knew better than either of us what is best for us

LENKHEIM Did he indeed, confound him!

JITTA He did indeed, Alfred, and I forbid you to confound him

LENKHEIM Well, if I do—and mind I dont say I will—I—

JITTA Yes?

LENKHEIM I will think it over

JITTA Just so, Alfred Goodnight. [*She goes out, tranquilly convinced that she will have her own way*]

LENKHEIM [*rushing to the door in a last effort to assert himself, and shouting after her*] If you think—[*He peters out, thrusts his hands desperately into his pockets like a cleaned-out gambler, trots back irresolutely to his writing-table, takes up the MS., stares at it for a moment, and reads slowly*] “By Professor Alfred Lenkheim, Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Vienna” Well, I’m dashed!

ACT III

Mrs Haldenstedt is in her sitting-room with Alfred and Fessler, all three very busy going through the papers of her late husband She is feverishly reading letters, and tearing them up and throwing them into the waste-paper basket as they prove one after another to be of no interest Her sighs and exclamations of disappointment and impatience are getting on the nerves of Alfred, who is trying to read a manuscript He flinches at the sharp sounds made by her violent tearing of the letters Fessler, who is sorting some papers which he has already gone through, is sympathetic, and looks pityingly at the widow from time to time

The room is lighted by a large bay window, with a window-seat under it The table heaped with papers is in this bay, and Mrs Haldenstedt sits at the head of it with her back to the light,

and Alfred and Fessler at the sides of it to her right and left respectively The corner of the room behind them on their right is cut off by a double door leading to the study Another door leading to the corridor of the flat is in the diagonally opposite corner, and is consequently before them on their left On their right between the window and the study door, a console stands against the wall, with flowers on it, and above it a convex mirror On the same side of the room, a couch

LENKHEIM [*unable to bear the noise any longer*] Do you mind my taking these manuscripts into the study and examining them there? They require a certain degree of quiet concentration

AGNES I am so sorry Bruno always said that it was like trying to work in a shooting gallery when I cleared up his papers and tore up useless letters But if you dont tear them what is there to prevent the servants and everyone else from reading them?

ALFRED Just so But why not leave the work to us? Why worry? Cant you trust us?

AGNES Oh, Professor, how can you ask me that? Of course I can trust you

LENKHEIM [*nodding*] Good Then do trust us [*He goes into the study, and shuts the door behind him*]

AGNES [*alone with Fessler, letting herself droop*] I have gone through this last batch of letters three times over in the hope of finding some clue But it’s no use theres nothing

FESSLER You mustnt worry

AGNES [*sitting up sharply*] Have you ever lost anyone you really cared for?

FESSLER Well, my poor dear father—

AGNES I’m not talking about poor dear fathers or poor dear anybodies Bruno was none of your poor dears he was three quarters of my life, even if half of it was being his slave and his household drudge All the same, I cant spend my whole life doing nothing but grieving, can I?

FESSLER Just so Of course not

AGNES Life goes on, doesnt it? House-keeping goes on the future has to be thought for as well as the past All my business and responsibilities and duties go on just as if nothing had happened.

FESSLER I’m so glad you have recovered enough to be able to look at it in that way

AGNES Doctor Fessler a widow is not an invalid, and it doesnt help her to be treated

as one when the first shock is over

FESSLER Quite so Quite so

AGNES I am going to talk to you very seriously

FESSLER Of course Of course.

AGNES And you are going to talk to me seriously, I hope.

FESSLER [*surprised*] But certainly, my dear Mrs Haldenstedt

AGNES Yes; but that doesn't mean saying "Certainly" and "Of course" and "Quite so" quite so" to everything I say, as if you were soothing a baby

FESSLER [*protesting*] But I assure you I—

AGNES [*gripping his hand on the table*] Tell me the honest truth Did you consider Bruno a clever man?

FESSLER [*amazed*] Mrs Haldenstedt!"

AGNES Do you think he had anything to say more than any of the rest of the professors? [*Stopping him as he opens his mouth for a fresh protest*] Now if you don't, please don't begin to excuse yourself and spare my feelings. I've had enough of having my feelings spared. I want the truth

FESSLER [*whole-heartedly*] My dear Mrs Haldenstedt he was a great man His psychological doctrine was a revelation It was the beginning of a new epoch in science

AGNES So I have always understood I know he thought so himself.

FESSLER [*indignant*] Oh no he was the most modest of men I am sure he never said so

AGNES Do you think a man's wife knows nothing about his thoughts except what he tells?

FESSLER I am quite sure he did not know half his own greatness

AGNES Then will you tell me what has become of it all? You and Professor Lenkheim have gone through his papers with me Have we come across one word that could not have been written by an elementary schoolmaster?

FESSLER [*shaken a little*] Well, everything he wrote, even about trifles, has his peculiar touch

AGNES Everything he wrote is in his own handwriting, of course, if you mean that But can you pick out from all that heap one single bit of paper which you could shew to a stranger and expect him to say "The man that wrote this must have been as great as Einstein"?

FESSLER. Well, not exactly Einstein, perhaps. But— [*he stops*].

AGNES But what? Suppose he had left you a safe full of diamonds, and when you opened the safe it was empty!

FESSLER Oh, you exaggerate!

AGNES [*rising, out of patience*] Doctor Fessler if you can take neither me nor my husband's affairs seriously, I think you had better leave both alone

FESSLER [*rising, greatly surprised*] Have I offended you?

AGNES [*disarmed by his naïve sincerity*] No, no Never mind Never mind You are too young You are not used to women [*Sitting down again*] Sit down, won't you? I will talk to Professor Lenkheim about it. He will understand

FESSLER [*standing stiffly, being now really offended*] By all means, Mrs Haldenstedt, though I really do not see what he can say more than I can

AGNES There! You are offended But if you had been neglected as I have been for months past, while my husband spent hours and hours and hours in his study, writing, writing, writing, using up paper until it cost as much as the butter and eggs, you would want to know what had become of it all

FESSLER [*sitting down again with a gesture of apology*] True. I should have thought of that

AGNES I never complained, because I thought it was a book that would make him famous and bring him in money Well, is that heap of old letters and bills and prescriptions all that came of it? Don't tell me there is a book somewhere; and I want to know where it is Did he go mad and destroy it? If not, who took it from him? Did that woman?

FESSLER. Good gracious, Mrs Haldenstedt!

AGNES Oh, this dreadful ending to all our happiness! It spoils everything that was nice in our lives When the first and best of it was over and we settled down, troubles came I know, but I had my memories, and could sit and think of them Now they are all poisoned for me

FESSLER [*reflectively*] Dear Mrs Haldenstedt may I speak quite frankly to you?

AGNES Why, I am begging and praying you to But I can get nothing out of you but sympathy, as if you were only a visitor instead of going to marry my daughter

FESSLER. You see, though your husband will be remembered as a great psychologist, he had to practise as a doctor to make a

living Well, the wickedest and worst people have to call in doctors just as often as respectable people, and a doctor cant have them coming to his own house where his wife and daughter are He has to keep a consulting room somewhere where they can come The landlady said he rented the room to see his friends in occasionally I daresay the women he saw there were common women, but how do you know that they were not his patients?

AGNES Dont deceive yourself, and dont try to deceive me Whatever I may have said when I was upset, I knew very well all along that Bruno never went with common women from the streets The landlady said it was always the same woman, and that she was a lady When she ran away she took that book with her you mark my words [*She rises and goes moodily to the console*]

They are interrupted by Lenkheim, who opens the door of the study and trots in flourishing a manuscript

LENKHEIM See here!

AGNES The book!

LENKHEIM I have just found an unfinished lecture on varieties of sleep

AGNES [*disappointed*] Only a lecture! [*Taking the manuscript*] Why, it's only six pages And what can it mean? There is only one sort of sleep

LENKHEIM Not at all He says that hardly any two people sleep in the same way Every case is an individual one You must read it, Fessler

FESSLER [*eagerly*] How interesting! May I look? [*Taking it from Mrs Haldenstedt*] Thank you I'll read it in the study [*To Alfred*] Mrs Haldenstedt wants to speak to you [*He hurries into the study*]

AGNES [*shaking her head*] You see, Professor, it doesnt account for anything

LENKHEIM What doesnt?

AGNES The lecture about sleep He could have written it in one evening Thats not the book that he said might be my best insurance policy It was part of his provision for me He would never have given it to another woman If she has it, she stole it [*She sits down on the couch*]

LENKHEIM You are still worrying about that woman I shouldnt if I were you [*He takes his former chair, drawing it from the table to the couch*]

AGNES I shall worry about her until I find

out who she is And I will find her out some day

LENKHEIM If it is any comfort to you, you may take my word for it that with all his professional engagements it was utterly impossible for him to have given much of his time to any woman

AGNES What comfort is there in that? One hour is enough for a man Then he can sit alone at his desk, thinking he is writing some great scientific work, when all the time he is thinking of her, living the hour over again, and looking forward to the next one, right in his wife's face

LENKHEIM [*very uncomfortable*] Mrs Haldenstedt do you suspect anybody?

AGNES I cant see anything clearly I thought I knew everybody that it could possibly be, but there's nobody All I know is what he liked and what he wanted, and how easily he could get it by lifting up his little finger Oh, I know exactly how he deceived us

LENKHEIM [*rising, startled*] Us!

AGNES Well, me and Edith, of course

LENKHEIM [*sitting down, relieved*] Oh! Just so

AGNES She wasnt what you think she was, Professor she was one of us And I say that when a man has a wife and children and a home and a good position, he should think twice before asking any respectable woman to meet him in such a room in such a house It was fit neither for him nor for her

LENKHEIM [*drawing a little closer to her*] Dear lady may I ask you a very indiscreet question? I shall not be in the least offended if you refuse to answer it

AGNES What is it?

LENKHEIM Was your marriage a happy one?

AGNES I always thought it was, at least until the last few years Then there was a sudden change Up to that time he was full of interest in his home, in Edith's education, in our plans, our money, the chance of our being able to move into a better house, the furniture and pictures, in everything Then he seemed to get beyond us somehow

LENKHEIM What were the symptoms?

AGNES Well, he was sometimes very irritable, though he used to be a perfect lamb I thought it was only his health, for of course neither of us was growing younger I know better now Oh, what a fool I was! But that

is how things happen They go on from year to year under your very nose, staring you in the face, and you never notice, never think, because your mind is off the track And then suddenly your eyes are opened with a bang, and you could kill yourself for having been so blind If I could only find out who she was! [*She rises restlessly*]

LENKHEIM Mrs Haldenstedt. take my advice give it up What is the use of tormenting yourself? You will have no peace until you put that woman out of your head

AGNES I dont want peace I want to find her out

LENKHEIM [*rising*] But suppose you do find her What then? Think of the scandal Believe me, it's better not to know You could not hurt her without hurting yourself and Edith worse

AGNES. I dont want to make a scandal, and I dont want to hurt her I want to find out from her what sort of life Bruno was really leading, and what has become of all that work he did

LENKHEIM But the lecture on varieties of sleep—

AGNES. Stuff! I know the variety of sleep he learnt from her [*Looking at him queerly*] Why do you want to prevent me from finding her out?

LENKHEIM [*meeting her eye with imposing firmness*] Solely for your own sake, Mrs Haldenstedt. How could it possibly affect me? Banish this abandoned female from your mind, and trust to Time Time is the great healer Time will restore your happiness

AGNES Well, Time works wonders, they say But it will never comfort me until I know for certain that the happiness he had with me was the right sort of happiness, and the happiness he had with the other woman the wrong sort How do I know that she wasnt a cleverer woman than I am? I dont care that [*snapping her fingers*] how young she is, or how pretty she is Time will bring her to my level in those ways soon enough But I'm not clever at the things he was clever at I dont understand science nor care about it. If I have to keep the house spick and span I cant always keep myself spick and span, and I know he was particular about such things Thats where she might have cut me out. She might easily have persuaded him that she was the right woman for him, and

that I was the wrong one

LENKHEIM No, no You were an excellent wife to him, Mrs Haldenstedt, and he knew it

AGNES I dont say I wasnt. But she hadnt to keep the house for him She had nothing to do but please him And if she was clever into the bargain, what chance had I?

Edith comes in from the corridor

EDITH Good morning, Professor

LENKHEIM [*relieved by the interruption*] Good morning Will you excuse me, Mrs Haldenstedt I have a few words to say to Fessler before Jitta comes

AGNES You have been so good I will think over your advice indeed I will

LENKHEIM [*encouragingly*] Do [*He waves his hand to Edith, and goes into the study, leaving the mother and daughter alone together*]

AGNES [*looking after him bitterly as she goes back to her place at the table*] It's easy for him to talk

EDITH [*wandering about restlessly between the table and the console*] Why do you listen to him? Why do you run to strangers when you want to talk about father? Why should our being mother and daughter keep us so far apart?

AGNES What a thing to say, child

EDITH [*going to her*] Of course if you dont want me, mother, I dont want to force myself on you

AGNES [*dutifully, without real feeling*] Well, of course, darling, I want you

EDITH [*irritated*] No, not of course, not in the way you think. Has it occurred to you that it is rather hard on me to be left entirely to myself when things are so serious with us?

AGNES. I dont know what you have to complain of You used to trust me to know what was right for you, and now you have suddenly turned on me Surely, child, nobody can be a better judge of what is best for you than your own mother Here I am, worried to death almost, and you making it worse for me by setting yourself against me

EDITH I am not setting myself against you, mother. What I am setting myself against is being expected to go through life blindfold, or pretending to be blindfold I am to be a good little child, and not know anything nor feel anything that little children ought not to know and feel, just when I, as a woman, most want the companionship of another woman to whom I can pour out my

self, thank you And now I must be off [*He goes past her towards the door*]

JITTA [*shaking his hand*] Goodbye, Doctor Dont despise my help

FESSLER Oh no, Mrs Lenkheim, but—

Mrs Haldenstedt comes in

AGNES [*still distracted*] Oh, what is this that Edith tells me, Doctor?

FESSLER We wont discuss it now, Mrs Haldenstedt You had better talk it over with Mrs Lenkheim Goodbye Goodbye, Mrs Lenkheim [*He bows to them and goes out*]

AGNES Sit down, wont you? [*Jitta sits on the couch Agnes sits down weofully beside her*] He's gone, and Heaven knows whether he will ever come back This is a marked house everybody deserts it Who knows how soon I shall be left alone here to haunt the place like my own shadow? I shall sit alone, going over and over that dreadful time in my imagination, with no relief but just thinking how I can catch that wretch that stole from me my right to be beside my husband when he died

JITTA She did not intend that You may forgive her that, at least

AGNES Oh, you mustnt think it's mere spite and revenge It's that I really loved Bruno to the last as I loved him from the first He was all I had that I cared about I am not like a man, to begin all over again with a new love I shall never get away from it or get over it. Day by day all those years we lived together, sat at the same table, took it in turns to rock the cradle or take the child in our hands to pet it, and then he goes off to another woman without a word or a thought for me [*Crying*] I didnt deserve it I didnt indeed

JITTA There, dear, there! Dont torture yourself After all, if he had died in your arms, you would still have had to grieve for him It might even have broken your heart

AGNES Oh, if only it had! I could think of him then without bitterness and shame

JITTA Try to forgive him for the sake of the old days when you were young together What does it matter what foolish things we old people do?

AGNES I cant forgive him Not while I am in the dark about her Listen to me, Mrs Lenkheim If I thought it was only her body that took him, I wouldnt care a straw I have had thoughts myself about our young men at the college sports only fancies of course, and I wouldnt have indulged them for the

world, but a man might What I cant bear is the thought that she might have been somebody like you

JITTA [*startled*] Like me!

AGNES Yes for he thought a great deal of you, and if you had been that sort of woman, I might have been jealous of you You are clever in his way, and you could understand him when he was talking right above my head. You could talk about his work to him I couldnt

JITTA Oh no, Mrs Haldenstedt I knew better than that Nothing annoys a man more than a woman who talks to him about his business and pretends to understand it Do you know what Bruno always talked to me about? what it always came round to, no matter what subject he started with?

AGNES What?

JITTA You

AGNES Me!

JITTA Yes, you, you, you, you Do you know, I sometimes wanted to shake him for not taking a little more interest in me occasionally? His conscience was never easy about you You had done everything for him, and he had taken it all and gone on with his scientific work the work that did not pay, when he might have been making a fashionable practice for himself and leaving you comfortably off

AGNES [*beginning to cry*] But I never grudged it to him I wanted him to be great I wasnt really as good a wife as I might have been I worried him about things that he neednt have known anything about. It's in my nature I cant help it

JITTA It was not in his nature to blame you for that He understood He was frightfully faithful to you You possessed all his thoughts you dominated his destiny you haunted him What right had you to take a great man like that all to yourself? I wanted a little bit of Bruno, but you stood always in the way Marriage is a very wonderful thing It held him as nothing else could hold him

AGNES But the other woman?

JITTA Oh, the other woman! Need you make such a fuss about her? You dont even know whether she was not a patient who had to conceal the fact that she was consulting a doctor There are such people, you know But suppose she was what you think! Would a woman who had any serious relations with him have coolly walked off and left him to

die? A pet dog would not have done such a thing. They would have found it at his side.

AGNES [*excitedly*] You think then that though he forgot what was due to himself, he didn't forget what was due to me? that when he went into that disgraceful place with another woman he was only making a convenience of her? that it was a mere chance that she was there to close his eyes, like a chambermaid in a hotel?

JITTA She did not close his eyes. She stole away from his side after coldbloodedly covering up her tracks. Could you have done that?

AGNES I never thought of that. Of course, of course. Yes, that shewed what she was, didn't it?

JITTA What does it matter what she was? She came out of the dark, and went back into the dark. Leave her there, as she left him.

AGNES [*shaking her head*] I can't imagine how women can bring themselves to behave so. What sort of women must they be? She must have known that he could never have cared for her.

JITTA You don't know how she got him there. But I know that if he really opened his heart to her, he talked to her about you.

AGNES [*smiling*] Well, I am sure, Mrs Lenkheim, this talk has made the most wonderful difference to me. You don't know how much good you have done me. It only shews how little we can trust our own feelings and our own judgment when such troubles come to us. The weight you have taken off my mind! you can't imagine.

JITTA Have I? Then I have done what I came to do. [*She rises*]

AGNES [*holding her*] Oh, don't go yet. You know, it's very funny how one's mind works.

JITTA [*sitting down again*] How?

AGNES [*slowly and almost roguishly*] I'm so grateful to you, that I'm afraid of offending you if I tell you. But I am sure you will only laugh.

JITTA [*with a melancholy smile*] We both need a good laugh, don't we?

AGNES Have you ever found that you have been all along thinking something that never came into your head for a single moment?

JITTA. That sounds a little difficult. I am afraid I don't quite follow.

AGNES Of course you don't. It's too silly. But do you know that the moment you took that weight off my mind, and gave me back my peace and happiness—

JITTA [*murmurs*] I am so glad that I did.

AGNES [*nodding gratefully, and continuing*] Well, that very moment I knew that I had been believing all along—but I don't think I ought to say it; only it's so funny.

JITTA What?

AGNES Why, that you were the woman [*She begins to chuckle*]

JITTA No!!!

AGNES Yes I did.

JITTA But really?

AGNES Really and truly.

JITTA [*beginning to laugh hysterically*] How funny!

AGNES [*her chuckles now culminating in hearty laughter*] Isn't it? You're not angry, are you? Oh dear—[*laughing more than ever*]

JITTA Oh no, of course not.

Jitta has a paroxysm of agonizing laughter, and Agnes accompanies her without a suspicion that she is not enjoying the joke in good faith. Jitta at last recovers her self-control with a desperate effort.

JITTA Don't make me laugh any more. I am afraid I shall go into hysterics. I am still very far from well.

AGNES It's such a shame to laugh at all at such a time. But for the life of me I couldn't help it.

JITTA [*looking hard at her*] You know, Mrs Haldenstedt, I was very very fond of him.

AGNES I am sure you were, darling, and I shouldn't have minded a bit if it had been you. In fact I'm half disappointed that it wasn't you, you have been such an angel to me. Isn't it funny, the things that come into our heads? But it's wicked of me to make you talk and laugh so much, and you so ill. You're very pale, dear. Can I get you anything?

JITTA If I might just lie down here for awhile. I—

AGNES [*rising to make room for Jitta to recline*] Yes, yes, of course you shall, dear. Make yourself comfortable.

JITTA I don't want to go without seeing Edith.

AGNES [*taken aback*] Oh!

JITTA What is it?

AGNES I forgot all about Edith. Who is to tell her? She sees her father like a saint in a

picture, and I could never put it to her in the wonderful way you put it to me. If only you would be so good as to tell her for me. Would you mind?

JITTA Not in the least. Edith is like a child of my own to me. It would be the greatest happiness to me if I could set her mind at rest as you are good enough to think I have set yours.

AGNES You have indeed and indeed you have. I am sure what we owe you, with your dear husband coming here every day to set the papers in order, and you being more than an angel to me in spite of your illness, words can never say. Just lie quiet where you are, and I will send Edith to you. Oh, you have made me happy, dear! [*She goes out into the corridor*]

Jitta, left alone, begins to laugh again hysterically, and is dissolving into convulsive sobs when she makes a great effort, springs up from the sofa, dashes the tears from her eyes with a proud gesture, goes to the glass, and has just made herself presentable when Edith appears. Her eyes are wide open and her expression one of joyful surprise and relief. She runs eagerly to Jitta.

EDITH What on earth have you done to mother? She is laughing. She is positively singing. Either you are a witch, or she has gone mad.

JITTA Are you angry with her for daring to sing in this house of mourning? Or angry with me for making her sing?

EDITH Oh no, it's rather a relief. But it's very odd. How did you do it?

JITTA She made me laugh before I made her sing. You mustn't be shocked, dear. There is always a sort of reaction. Nature must have a relief from any feeling, no matter how deep and sincere it is. Have you ever seen a soldier's funeral?

EDITH No. Why?

JITTA They play the Dead March as they go to the grave, but they play the merriest tunes they know on their way back.

EDITH How unfeeling!

JITTA Yes, but how natural! Your mother would have gone mad if she had gone on as she was for another week. I am not sure that I should not have gone mad myself if she had not made me laugh [*Taking Edith by the shoulders and looking straight at her*]. And now what I want to know is how I am to make you laugh. For you will go mad if

you do not get back into everyday life again.

EDITH [*backing to the table, and half sitting against its edge*] Yes. I know. This house has been a sort of madhouse since my father died. We haven't spoken naturally, nor walked naturally, nor breathed naturally, nor thought naturally, because we were all so determined to feel naturally. Somehow, my mother's laughing and singing has made nonsense of it all suddenly.

JITTA Then you are happy again? If so, I may as well go home.

EDITH Happy! Oh no. But I am done with hypocrisy and conventionality, and that is such a relief that I seem happy by contrast. I suppose it is a sort of happiness to be able to give myself up at last wholly to my sorrow.

JITTA [*sitting down in Lenkheim's chair*] Which sorrow? The old sorrow that God made for you, or the new one that you have made for yourself?

EDITH [*straightening up*] I don't know what you mean.

JITTA Doctor Fessler says you have jilted him.

EDITH Did he call it jilting him?

JITTA No. I call it that.

EDITH But you can't think that. Do you know what he said?

JITTA No. Anything very dreadful?

EDITH He believes that my father died in the arms of a common woman of the streets.

JITTA And he thinks your father must have been as worthless as the woman he died with. I see.

EDITH Not at all. That is what is so dreadful. He thinks it makes no difference. He adores my father as much as he ever did, but he thinks you have to leave all that out when you are judging men. He thinks a woman doesn't matter. I can't forgive him for that. I couldn't marry a man unless he felt exactly as I do about my father.

JITTA Is that reasonable, dear? How could poor Doctor Fessler feel as you feel? You! your father's daughter!

EDITH Oh, of course I know that. I don't expect him to feel the same affection. But if he thought my father could go with low women—if he did not know for certain, as I know, that the woman my father loved must have been one of the best and noblest of

women, I would rather die than let him touch me.

JITTA My dear: how can he know for certain? You do not know for certain yourself

EDITH I know I cant prove it But I am certain And I will devote my life to proving it

JITTA How?

EDITH I will find the woman that is how. I have thought and thought about it I know that she cannot be very far off. I know that her grief and desolation must be as great as mine. greater I know she will love me because I am his daughter And I know that she will be somebody worthy of him

JITTA Edith, Edith, how sentimental you are!

EDITH [*fiercely*] You call my feeling sentimentality! Are you going to disappoint me too?

JITTA [*sternly*] You must learn to expect disappointments How do you know that if you found this woman she would not disappoint you? It is easy to imagine wonderful women worthy of your father's love But the real person always kills the imagined person.

EDITH He said that once

JITTA Well, is it not true? Can you think of any real woman among your acquaintances that you could bear to think of as that woman—even the best of them?

EDITH You cant put me off that way I tell you I know. There is some woman who was real to my father, and he loved her. I shall love her when she is real to me Besides, I have a queer sense that I know her quite as well as a real person, that she is here within reach of my hands if only I could recollect I—I sometimes wonder does everybody know? does my mother know?

JITTA [*quickly*] Your mother does not know. Your mother could never understand

EDITH Jitta do you know?

JITTA Yes

EDITH Jitta!!

JITTA Yes I know that poor criminal. I know what has become of her I know what she did. I know what she has suffered ever since.

EDITH But how do you know? Oh, tell me. You must tell me now

JITTA When you are excited like that your voice is his voice. Oh, the agony of hearing it, and the happiness! You bring him to life

again for me

EDITH Then it was—

JITTA Only me, dear

EDITH [*flinging herself into Jitta's arms*] Only you! Who better could it be? Of course it was you I knew it all along, only I couldnt recollect. Oh, darling! Dont you want a daughter? Here I am His daughter.

JITTA Dearest, yes You have been a daughter to me ever since I knew him. But we must be very careful, very discreet You see, you are very young

EDITH Oh, dont begin that I dont want that sort of mother.

JITTA I know. But I mustnt take your devotion—it is devotion, isnt it?—

EDITH Oh yes, yes

JITTA I mustnt take it under false pretences Above all, you must not throw away your engagement because your lover does not feel about me as you do He is right about me, you know. I am not a good woman Have you quite forgotten that I have a husband, and that for your father's sake I was unfaithful to him?

EDITH [*naïvely*] Oh, but Alfred is such a chump!

JITTA [*a little shocked*] Edith!

EDITH And papa was such a wonderful man! Nobody could blame you

JITTA I assure you a great many people would blame me so much that they would never speak to me again if they knew

EDITH More shame for them! Do such people matter?

JITTA They do, dear I am afraid they are the only people who do matter in this wretched world So you mustnt tell them. You mustnt tell anybody

EDITH [*slowly*] I suppose not.

JITTA Did you intend to tell everybody?

EDITH No, of course not I am not such a fool as that But I did think that if I told Doctor Fessler he might see that he was wrong.

JITTA And you might forgive him Very well I give you leave to tell him But you understand that if you tell him you must marry him, for you mustnt tell anyone except your husband

EDITH You want me to marry him?

JITTA I do.

EDITH Then I'll telephone him. I suppose that will do I am so happy now that it

doesn't matter tuppence whom I marry [*Lenkheim opens the study door and is coming in when Edith, not hearing him, goes on*] I'd marry anyone to please you I'd even marry Alfred.

LENKHEIM Thank you [*The two women spring up in dismay*] That's very kind of you, Edith, and very kind of Jitta to include me in the number of husbands she has apparently been offering you But I have no intention of divorcing her at present

EDITH [*not knowing what else to say*] It wasn't that Mrs Lenkheim never offered you to me

JITTA Go off to the telephone, dear, and make it up with your man I will make it up for you with Alfred

LENKHEIM Do, Edith [*He crosses the room to the other door, and opens it for her with sardonic politeness*]

EDITH [*to Lenkheim, after kissing Jitta rather defiantly*] Mrs Lenkheim did not say a single unkind word about you. I did [*She nods mockingly in his face and goes out*]

LENKHEIM Have you told her?

JITTA [*her bored manner with her husband contrasting strongly with her warm interest in Edith*] She guessed She knew It is no use keeping secrets when they will not keep themselves I have made her happy that is all I care about [*She goes listlessly to the window-seat, and sits there looking out, with her shoulder turned to him*]

LENKHEIM And have you told the old woman? Have you made her happy?

JITTA I have made her happy But I did not tell her The strange thing is that she guesses it too, but she will never know it She doesn't want to know it Edith did That makes all the difference I have made them both happy I wish someone could make me happy

LENKHEIM As I unfortunately am only your husband, I suppose there is no use my trying

JITTA [*turning her face to him with open contempt*] You!

LENKHEIM Funny, isn't it?

JITTA [*rising*] Don't be insufferable You owe it to your position as an injured husband never to speak to me when we are alone and there are no appearances to be kept up You swore not to And you have been talking to me ever since, except when there was somebody else present to talk to

LENKHEIM Make no mistake, Jitta when I swore that, I meant it

JITTA [*ironically*] So it appears

LENKHEIM When you swore to be faithful to me, you meant it, didn't you?

JITTA [*interrupting him curtly*] You need not remind me of that again I have not denied it I have not excused myself But I do not intend to have it thrown in my teeth every time we meet [*She turns away from him determinedly, and sits down in the chair between the table and the door*]

LENKHEIM Very well, then, don't you start reminding me every time we meet that I swore to do a good many things that I find I can't do Is that a bargain?

JITTA [*a little ashamed, feeling that she has allowed herself to descend to his level*] Yes I beg your pardon I should not have said it But please remember that you can hurt me more than I can hurt you, because you have done nothing wrong You are within your rights you are above reproach you have the superior position morally no taunts of mine can degrade you as your reproaches can degrade me [*Tragically*] I am a miserable creature I betrayed you to please myself I deserted him in his extremity to save myself Please leave me to my disgrace Nothing that you can say or think can add to the contempt I feel for myself

LENKHEIM [*chuckling a little*] How you enjoy being miserable, Jitta!

JITTA Enjoy!!

LENKHEIM You just revel in it You think yourself such a jolly romantic figure You think that everything that happens to you is extraordinarily interesting because it happens to you And you think that everything that happens to me is quite uninteresting because it hasn't happened to you But what has happened to you has happened to lots of women—except, of course, the way it ended. And even that was an accident that might have happened to anyone

JITTA No doubt Unfortunately, I did not behave as any decent woman would

LENKHEIM That is just where you are mistaken, darling When you were brought to the point and put to the proof, you didn't behave romantically you behaved very sensibly You kept your head, and did just the right thing You saved your reputation and my reputation You prevented a horrible scandal You have managed to make his wife

and daughter happy And yet you think you are ashamed of yourself because you were not found stretched on his dead body, with the limelight streaming on your white face, and the band playing slow music

JITTA Oh, what a nature you have, Alfred! You are prosaic to the core

LENKHEIM [*grinning*] If you had only been clever enough to take me in, your success would have been complete It wouldnt have been difficult I always took you in when I had an adventure

JITTA [*rising, very unpleasantly surprised, and not a little furious*] You! You have had adventures since we were married? You have deceived me?

LENKHEIM Now dont begin imagining that I am a Don Juan. To be precise, I have kissed other women twice I was drunk both times And I had a serious affair with your dear friend Thelma Petersen. That lasted until she and her husband went back to Norway.

JITTA Oh, how disgraceful! And you call her my friend!

LENKHEIM. I call Bruno Haldenstedt my friend. So you see I am not your moral superior I thought it might restore your happiness a little to know that

JITTA Alfred I will never speak to you nor cross the threshold of your house again

LENKHEIM [*more amused than ever*] Except when you call to tell me so When you let out about Haldenstedt I felt just as you feel now Tomorrow you will think better of it, as I have thought better of it.

JITTA [*more dignified than ever*] If you imagine that any relations that could exist between Mrs Petersen and yourself were in the least like my relations with Bruno, you only shew for the thousandth time how incapable you are of understanding either him or me

LENKHEIM I'm afraid you dont understand either Thelma or me as sympathetically as I could wish Thelma was a very superior woman, let me tell you If my taste did not lie in the direction of superior women I shouldnt have married you

JITTA I will not have it, Alfred I will not be dragged down to your level

LENKHEIM. Five minutes ago you were amusing yourself by pretending that you were beneath contempt

JITTA. So I am, on my own plane, and on his But not on yours

LENKHEIM I dont believe theres a woman alive who doesnt look on herself as a special creation, and consider her husband an inferior and common sort of animal

JITTA You forget that I did not think of Bruno in that way

LENKHEIM Yes, but then he wasnt your husband Thelma thought me a much finer fellow than Petersen

JITTA [*exasperated*] If you mention that woman to me again, I will break my promise to you, and walk straight out of your house before all the world

LENKHEIM That will only make us quits, because, as it happens, I am going to break my promise to you.

JITTA How?

LENKHEIM About the book I have read it

JITTA Well?

LENKHEIM Well, I'll be hanged if I put my name to it In the first place nobody would believe I had ever written it In the second, it's the most utter tommy-rot that was ever put forward as a serious contribution to psychology Why, it flatly contradicts everything I have been teaching for years past, and everything I was taught myself

JITTA [*intensely angry*] Does that prove it to be tommy-rot, or does it prove that you are an idiot?

LENKHEIM I may be an idiot, but my idiocy is the accepted idiocy taught in the University at which I am a professor, and his idiocy is not taught anywhere Do you forget that I have to earn bread for the household, and that your own money hardly pays for your dresses? This book would ruin us both

JITTA It is a sacred trust, and I swore to him that it should be fulfilled

LENKHEIM I didnt And the old woman has just told me that he said the book was to be her insurance policy No doubt I am Bruno's inferior, but I draw the line at helping him to rob his widow for my own profit

JITTA Then you refuse to carry out his intentions?

LENKHEIM I cant carry out his intentions

JITTA You mean you wont

LENKHEIM I mean what I say When he left me this book of his, he did so on the understanding that I was to know nothing of his relations with you He hadnt quite such a low opinion of me as to suppose that I

would take it as the price of my wife Well, whose fault is it that I know all about it? Who let the secret out? You did

JITTA [*collapsing into his chair*] Oh how shamefully I have betrayed him at every step! How despicable I am!

LENKHEIM [*sympathetically*] Not a bit of it, dear You have just said yourself that if secrets dont keep themselves, nobody can keep them This secret wouldnt keep itself Come! stop crying If only you would be content to be a woman for a moment, and not a heroine! And oh Lord! if you only had the smallest sense of humor!

JITTA [*passionately*] You cant even try to console me without sneering at me Do you know what Edith called you?

LENKHEIM No You can tell me if it will relieve your feelings

JITTA She said you were a chump, and so you are

LENKHEIM All husbands are chumps, dear, after the first month or so Jolly good thing for their wives too, sometimes

JITTA What are you going to do with that book?

LENKHEIM If I had any regard for his reputation I should burn it at our domestic hearth

JITTA [*recovering her dignity, rising, and speaking with tranquil conviction*] You shall not do that, Alfred

LENKHEIM Perhaps not, but it would serve you right if I did

JITTA It would not serve Edith right Besides, his work, his reputation, his greatness—for whatever you may say I know that that book is the greatest that ever was written—belong not only to humanity, but to her And I love her as if she were my own daughter I have no other child

LENKHEIM [*wincing a little*] My fault, I suppose Oh, you can be nasty when you want to, Jitta

JITTA Oh, no, no Will you never understand?

LENKHEIM Probably not, being only a chump Be a little amiable, Jitta I havnt been so very hard on you, have I?

JITTA [*insisting*] You will not destroy the book? You will edit it? You will do everything for it that you could for a book of your own?

LENKHEIM Well, if—

Fessler and Edith come in arm-in-arm, followed by Mrs Haldenstedt

EDITH Here he is Kiss him

FESSLER [*hastily*] Tchut! [*Taking Jitta's hand and kissing it*] I owe you my life's happiness, Mrs Lenkheim

AGNES I am sure we all owe you the happiness of our lives You are our good angel indeed you are Oh, you are a lucky man, Mr Lenkheim, to have such a wife

JITTA [*striking in before he can reply*] I have one more piece of news for you, Mrs Haldenstedt. Alfred has found your husband's book It is a masterpiece He will edit it He will do everything he could do for it if it were his own book.

FESSLER [*triumphant*] Splendid!

AGNES [*overjoyed*] Oh, think of that! Edith [*she kisses Edith*]! Doctor [*she kisses the doctor*]! Professor [*she kisses Lenkheim*]! Didnt I say she was our good angel?

LENKHEIM And now, may I take my good angel home?

AGNES [*to Jitta*] Oh, must you go, dear

JITTA [*sweetly, to Agnes*] Yes, dear [*Threateningly to Alfred*] Come home [*She goes to the door*]

LENKHEIM [*cheerily, as he shakes hands with everybody*] Goodbye

ALL [*shaking hands*] Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye

JITTA [*sternly*] Alfred come home

LENKHEIM [*hastily obeying*] Yes, dear

AGNES [*as the door closes sharply behind them*] She's too good for him

THE END

XXXIV

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE; OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

BEING THE NOVEL OF CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION DONE INTO
A STAGE PLAY IN THREE ACTS AND IN BLANK VERSE

ACT I

A glade in Wiltstoken Park

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,
And from the well of Nature in our hearts
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice
That bears the weight of all the stamping world,
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,
Albeit most rich, most learned, and most wise,
Am yet most lonely What are riches worth
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse bearer
That life remains unpurchasable? Learning
Learns but one lesson—doubt! To excel all
Is, to be lonely Oh, ye busy birds,
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees
With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,
Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,
Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads
High heavens above us crawlers
[*A rook sets up a great carving, and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves.*
Lo, the leaves
That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me—
poor maid!—
Deride with joyous comfortable chatter
These stolen feathers Laugh at me, the clothed one
Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books
Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad
Give me a mate that never heard of these,
A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;
Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.
[*Another gust of wind and bird-chatter She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands Cashel Byron, in a*

white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees

CASHEL Whats this? Whom have we here?
A woman!

LYDIA [*looking up*] Yes

CASHEL You have no business here. I have.
Away!

Women distract me Hence!

LYDIA Bid you me hence?

I am upon mine own ground Who are you?
I take you for a god, a sylvan god

This place is mine I share it with the birds,
The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company
Of haunted solitudes.

CASHEL. A sylvan god!

A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?
Walk? heave the chest with breath? or like a feather

Lift you—like this? [*He sets her on her feet.*

LYDIA [*panting*] You take away my breath!
Youre strong. Your hands off, please Thank you. Farewell

CASHEL Before you go when shall we meet again?

LYDIA. Why should we meet again?

CASHEL Who knows? We shall.
That much I know by instinct. Whats your name?

LYDIA Lydia Carew

CASHEL Lydia's a pretty name
Where do you live?

LYDIA I' the castle

CASHEL [*thunderstruck*] Do not say
You are the lady of this great domain

LYDIA I am.

CASHEL. Accursed luck! I took you for
The daughter of some farmer Well, your pardon

I came too close. I looked too deep Farewell

LYDIA. I pardon that. Now tell me who you are

CASHEL. Ask me not whence I come, nor what I am.

You are the lady of the castle I

Have but this hard and blackened hand to live by

LYDIA I have felt its strength and envied you Your name?

I have told you mine

CASHEL My name is Cashel Byron

LYDIA I never heard the name, and yet you utter it

As men announce a celebrated name

Forgive my ignorance

CASHEL I bless it, Lydia

I have forgot your other name

LYDIA Carew

Cashel's a pretty name too

MELLISH [*calling through the wood*] Coo-ee! Byron!

CASHEL A thousand curses! Oh, I beg you, go

This is a man you must not meet

MELLISH [*further off*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA He's losing us What does he in my woods?

CASHEL He is a part of what I am What that is

You must not know It would end all between us

And yet there's no dishonor in't your lawyer, Who let your lodge to me, will vouch me honest

I am ashamed to tell you what I am—

At least, as yet Some day, perhaps

MELLISH [*nearer*] Coo-ee!

LYDIA His voice is nearer Fare you well, my tenant

When next your rent falls due, come to the castle

Pay me in person Sir your most obedient [*She curtsies and goes*]

CASHEL Lives in this castle! Owns this park! A lady

Marry a prizefighter! Impossible

And yet the prizefighter must marry her

Enter MELLISH

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish dam,

Is this thy park, that thou, with voice obscene,

Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my name

For all the world to know that Cashel Byron Is training here for combat

MELLISH Swine you me?

I've caught you, have I? You have found a woman

Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on

her.

I will I say it And my name's Bob Mellish CASHEL Change thy initial and be truly high

Hellish As for thy dog, why dost thou keep one

And bark thyself? Begone

MELLISH I'll not begone

You shall come back with me and do your duty—

Your duty to your backers, do you hear?

You have not punched the bag this blessed day

CASHEL The putrid bag engirdled by thy belt

Invites my fist

MELLISH [*weeping*] Ingrate! O wretched lot! Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish, Trainer of heroes, builder-up of brawn, Vicarious victor, thou createst champions That quickly turn thy tyrants But beware Without me thou art nothing Disobey me, And all thy boasted strength shall fall from thee

With flaccid muscles and with failing breath Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe, I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day Thou didst forswear thy training

CASHEL Noisome quack

That canst not from thine own abhorrent visage

Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st Even with thy presence my untainted blood Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself Rotten with surfeiting Leave me in peace This grove is sacred thou profanest it Hence! I have business that concerns thee not.

MELLISH Ay, with your woman You will lose your fight

Have you forgot your duty to your backers? Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is! What makes a man but duty? Where were we

Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words England expects that every man—

CASHEL Shall twaddle

About his duty Mellish at no hour Can I regard thee wholly without loathing, But when thou playst the moralist, by Heaven,

My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee, And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall On Mars's armor—but enough of that It does remind me of my mother

MELLISH Ah
Byron, let it remind thee Once I heard
An old song it ran thus [*He clears his throat*]
Ahem, Ahem!
[Sings]—They say there is no other
Can take the place of mother—
I am out o' voice: forgive me, but remember
Thy mother—were that sainted woman
here—
Would say, Obey thy trainer
CASHEL. Now, by Heaven,
Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out?
They thunder like an avalanche Old man
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now?
Presume not on thine age and on thy nasti-
ness
Vanish, and promptly
MELLISH Can I leave thee here
Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews?
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge
CASHEL Within this breast a fire is newly
lit
Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose
radiance
Shall make the orb of night hang in the
heavens
Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon
MELLISH Ah me, ah me, where wilt thou
spend the night?
CASHEL Wiltstoken's windows wandering
beneath,
Wiltstoken's holy bell hearkening,
Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly
MELLISH The lady of the castle! Thou art
mad
CASHEL 'Tis thou art mad to trifle in my
path
Thwart me no more Begone
MELLISH My boy, my son,
I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness
Thwart thee, my son! Ah no I'll go with
thee
I'll brave the dews I'll sacrifice my sleep
I am old—no matter ne'er shall it be said
Mellish deserted thee
CASHEL You resolute gods
That will not spare this man, upon your
knees
Take the disparity twixt his age and mine
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat
I step at your behest Bear you me witness
This is not Victory, but Execution
[*He solemnly projects his fist with colossal*

*force against the waistcoat of Mellish, who
doubles up like a folded towel, and lies
without sense or motion*
And now the night is beautiful again
[*The castle clock strikes the hour in the
distance.*
Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark!
Hark! Hark! Hark!
It strikes in poetry. 'Tis ten o'clock
Lydia to thee!
[*He steals off towards the castle Mellish stirs
and groans*

ACT II SCENE I

London A room in Lydia's house

Enter LYDIA and LUCIAN

LYDIA Welcome, dear cousin, to my London
house
Of late you have been chary of your visits.
LUCIAN I have been greatly occupied of
late
The minister to whom I act as scribe
In Downing Street was born in Birmingham,
And, like a thoroughbred commercial states-
man,
Splits his infinitives, which I, poor slave,
Must reunite, though all the time my heart
Yearns for my gentle coz's company
LYDIA Lucian there is some other reason.
Think!
Since England was a nation every mood
Her scribes with adverbs recklessly have
split,
But thine avoidance dates from yestermouth.
LUCIAN There is a man I like not haunts
this house
LYDIA Thou speakest of Cashel Byron?
LUCIAN Aye, of him.
Hast thou forgotten that eventful night
When as we gathered were at Hoskyn House
To hear a lecture by Herr Abendgasse,
He placed a single finger on my chest,
And I, ensorceled, would have sunk supine
Had not a chair received my falling form
LYDIA Pooh! That was but by way of
illustration
LUCIAN What right had he to illustrate his
point
Upon my person? Was I his assistant
That he should try experiments on me
As Simpson did on his with chloroform?
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo
He hath unmanned me— all my nerve is gone.
This very morning my official chief,

they doing?

LUCIAN Fighting with naked fists

LYDIA Oh, horrible!

I'll hear no more Or stay. how did it end?

Was Cashel hurt?

LUCIAN [*to Bashville*] Skip to the final round

BASHVILLE "Round Three the rumors that had gone about

Of a breakdown in Byron's recent training Seemed quite confirmed Upon the call of time

He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful, Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to Mend

At this point six to one was freely offered Upon the Dutchman, and Lord Worthington Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed certain,

Take down the number of the Panley boy The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is, Seemed this time likely to go hungry Cashel Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor, Who, not to be denied, followed him up, Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers "

LYDIA Oh stop—no more—or tell the worst at once

I'll be revenged Bashville call the police This brutal sailor shall be made to know There's law in England

LUCIAN Do not interrupt him

Mine ears are thirsting Finish, man. What next?

BASHVILLE "Forty to one, the Dutchman's friends exclaimed

Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed himself

A sportsman every inch Barely the bet Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's jaw

The sailor, bent on winning out of hand, Sent in his right The issue seemed a cert, When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left, Cross-counter'd like a hundredweight of brick—"

LUCIAN Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean?

BASHVILLE "The Dutchman went to grass, a beaten man "

LYDIA Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well done, Cashel!

BASHVILLE "A scene of indescribable excitement

Ensued, for it was now quite evident That Byron's grogginess had all along

Been feigned to make the market for his backers

We trust this sample of colonial smartness

Will not find imitators on this side,

The losers settled up like gentlemen,

But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste

In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,

And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his oxter,

Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd

The perfect pink of his condition"—[*a knock*]

LYDIA [*turning pale*] Bashville,

Didst hear? A knock.

BASHVILLE Madam. tis Byron's knock.

Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN Reeking from the ring!

Oh, monstrous! Say youre out

LYDIA Send him away.

I will not see the wretch How dare he keep

Secrets from me? I'll punish him Pray say

I'm not at home [*Bashville turns to go*] Yet stay I am afraid

He will not come again

LUCIAN A consummation

Devoutly to be wished by any lady

Pray, do you wish this man to come again?

LYDIA No, Lucian He hath used me very ill

He should have told me I will ne'er forgive him

Say, Not at home

BASHVILLE Yes, madam [*Exit*

LYDIA Stay—

LUCIAN [*stopping her*] No, Lydia.

You shall not countermand that proper order

Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,

The thousands at your bank, and, above all,

Your unassailable social position

Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn.

LYDIA Nay, coz. youre prejudiced

CASHIEL [*without*] Liar and slave!

LYDIA What words were those?

LUCIAN The man is drunk with slaughter.

Enter BASHVILLE running he shuts the door and locks it

BASHVILLE. Save yourselves at the staircase foot the champion

Sprawls on the mat, by trick o' wiestler tripped;

But when he rises, woe betide us all!

LYDIA Who bade you treat my visitor with violence?

BASHVILLE He would not take my answer, thrust the door

Back in my face, gave me the he i' th' throat,
Averred he felt your presence in his bones
I said he should feel mine there too, and
felled him,

Then fled to bar your door

LYDIA O lover's instinct!
He felt my presence Well, let him come in
We must not fail in courage with a fighter
Unlock the door

LUCIAN Stop Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity
To strike you were against his code of honor,
But me, above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession Also Bashville

BASHVILLE Think not of me, sir Let him
do his worst

Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference twixt his weight and
mine,

A second battle should he do this day
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my
mistress

Give me the word instant I'll take him on
Here—now—at catchweight Better bite the
carpet

A man, than fly, a coward

LUCIAN Bravely said
I will assist you with the poker

LYDIA No
I will not have him touched Open the door
BASHVILLE Destruction knocks thereat I
smile, and open

[*Bashville opens the door Dead silence*

Cashel enters, in tears A solemn pause

CASHEL You know my secret?
LYDIA Yes

CASHEL And thereupon
You bade your servant fling me from your
door

LYDIA I bade my servant say I was not
here

CASHEL [*to Bashville*] Why didst thou better
thy instruction, man?

Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee
this,"

Thoudst burst my heart I thank thee for
thy mercy

LYDIA Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him
"drunk with slaughter"?

Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?
CASHEL [*to Lucian*] The unwritten law that
shields the amateur

Against professional resentment, saves thee
O coward, to traduce behind their backs
Defenceless prizefighters!

LUCIAN Thou dost avow
Thou art a prizefighter

CASHEL It was my glory
I had hoped to offer to my lady there
My belts, my championships, my heaped-up
stakes,

My undefeated record but I knew
Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked

LYDIA Another secret?

LUCIAN Is there worse to come?
CASHEL Know ye not then my mother is an
actress?

LUCIAN How horrible!

LYDIA Nay, nay how interesting!

CASHEL A thousand victories cannot wipe
out

That birthstain Oh, my speech bewrayeth it
My earliest lesson was the player's speech
In Hamlet, and to this day I express myself
More like a mobbed queen than like a man
Of flesh and blood Well may your cousin
sneer!

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?

LUCIAN Injurious upstart if by Hecuba
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,
Know that she is to me, and I to her,
What never canst thou be I do defy thee,
And maugre all the odds thy skill doth give,
Outside I will await thee

LYDIA I forbid
Expressly any such duello Bashville
The door Put Mr Webber in a hansom,
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street
No answer tis my will

[*Exeunt LUCIAN and BASHVILLE*

And now, farewell
You must not come again, unless indeed
You can some day look in my eyes and say
Lydia my occupation's gone

CASHEL Ah no
It would remind you of my wretched mother
O God, let me be natural a moment!
What other occupation can I try?
What would you have me be?

LYDIA A gentleman
CASHEL A gentleman! Cashel Byron, stoop
To be the thing that bets on me! the fool
I flatter at so many coins a lesson!
The screaming creature who beside the ring
Gambles with basest wretches for my blood,
And pays with money that he never earned!
Let me die broken hearted rather!

LYDIA But
You need not be an idle gentleman
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen

CASHEL. Thats the collection for the loser,
Lydia.

I am not wont to need it When your friends
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll
Rue their presumption, tis their wont to
claim

A moral victory In a sort they are
Nature's M P s. I am not yet so threadbare
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA. You are offended with me

CASHEL. Yes I am
I can put up with much; but—"Nature's
gentleman"!

I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but
Must beg to be excused

LYDIA But surely, surely,
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners
With naked knuckles, is no work for you

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive
Fates

That weave my thread of life in ruder
patterns

Than these that lie, antimacassarly,
Asprent thy drawing room As well demand
Why I at birth chose to begin my life
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance?
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave?
Only one thing more foolish could have been,
And that was to be born, not man, but
woman

This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine?
LYDIA. These are not things of choice

CASHEL And did I choose
My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,
My springing muscle and untiring heart?
Did I implant the instinct in the race
That found a use for these, and said to me,
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine?

LYDIA But there are other callings in the
world

CASHEL Go tell thy painters to turn stock-
brokers,

Thy poet friends to stoop oer merchants'
desks

And pen prose records of the gains of greed
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker
Opes new careers Bid the professor quit
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the
world

The thing he would teach others. Then

return

To me and say Cashel: they have obeyed,
And on that pyre of sacrifice I, too,
Will throw my championship

LYDIA But tis so cruel

CASHEL Is it so? I have hardly noticed that,
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,
That many a two days bruise hath ruthless
given,

Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty
years,

Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,
The world that robs the poor, and with their
spoil

Does what its tradesmen tell it Oh, your
ladies!

Sealskinned and egret-feathered, all defiance
To Nature; cowering if one say to them
"What will the servants think?" Your gentle-
men!

Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood
Make chickenbutchers And your medicine
men!

Groping for cures in the tormented entrails
Of friendly dogs Pray have you asked all
these

To change then occupations? Find you mine
So grimly crueller? I cannot breathe
An air so petty and so poisonous

LYDIA But find you not their manners very
nice?

CASHEL. To me, perfection Oh, they con-
descend

With a rare grace. Your duke, who conde-
scends

Almost to the whole world, might for a Man
Pass in the eyes of those who never saw
The duke capped with a prince See then, ye
gods,

The duke turn footman, and his eager dame
Sink the great lady in the obsequious house-
maid!

Oh, at such moments I could wish the Court
Had but one breadbasket, that with my fist
I could make all its windy vanity

Gasp itself out on the gravel. Fare you well
I did not choose my calling, but at least
I can refrain from being a gentleman.

LYDIA You say farewell to me without a
pang

CASHEL. My calling hath apprenticed me to
pangs

This is a rib-bender, but I can bear it
It is a lonely thing to be a champion

LYDIA It is a lonelier thing to be a woman

CASHEL Be lonely then Shall it be said of thee

That for his brawn thou misalliance mad'st
Wi' the Prince of Ruffians? Never Go thy ways,

Or, if thou hast nostalgia of the mud,
Wed some bedogged wretch that on the slot
Of gilded snobbery, *ventre à terre*,
Will hunt through life with eager nose on earth

And hang thee thick with diamonds I am rich,

But all my gold was fought for with my hands
LYDIA What dost thou mean by rich?

CASHEL There is a man,
Hight Paradise, vaunted unconquerable,
Hath dared to say he will be glad to hear from me

I have replied that none can hear from me
Until a thousand solid pounds be staked
His friends have confidently found the money

Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine,
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds
I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum

LYDIA Thou silly Cashel, 'tis but a week's income

I did propose to give thee three times that
For pocket money when we two were wed
CASHEL Give me my hat. I have been fooling here

Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought
That only in America such revenues
Were decent deemed Enough My dream is dreamed.

Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest.

Farewell

LYDIA The golden mountain shall be thine
The day thou quitst thy horrible profession
CASHEL Tempt me not, woman It is honor calls

Slave to the Ring I rest until the face
Of Paradise be changed

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE Madam, your carriage,
Ordered by you at two 'Tis now half-past

CASHEL Sdeath! is it half-past two? The king! the king!

LYDIA The king! What mean you?

CASHEL I must meet a monarch

This very afternoon at Islington

LYDIA At Islington! You must be mad
CASHEL A cab!

Go call a cab, and let a cab be called,
And let the man that calls it be thy footman

LYDIA You are not well You shall not go alone

My carriage waits I must accompany you
I go to find my hat *[Exit*

CASHEL Like Paracelsus,
Who went to find his soul *[To Bashville]* And now, young man,

How comes it that a fellow of your inches
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me
On your next evening out I'll make a man of you

Surely you are ambitious and aspire—
BASHVILLE To be a butler and draw corks, wherefore,

By Heaven, I will draw yours

[He hits Cashel on the nose and runs out]
CASHEL *[thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger to his nose, and studying the blood on it]* Too quick for me!

There's money in this youth

Re-enter LYDIA, hatted and gloved

LYDIA O Heaven! you bleed

CASHEL Lend me a key or other frigid object,

That I may put it down my back, and staunch

The welling life stream

LYDIA *[giving him her keys]* Oh, what have you done?

CASHEL Flush on the boko napped your footman's left

LYDIA I do not understand

CASHEL True Pardon me.

I have received a blow upon the nose
In sport from Bashville Next, ablution, else
I shall be total gules *[He hurries out]*

LYDIA How well he speaks!

There is a silver trumpet in his lips
That stirs me to the finger ends His nose
Dropt lovely color 'tis a perfect blood
I would twere mingled with mine own!

Enter BASHVILLE

What now?

BASHVILLE Madam, the coachman can no longer wait

The horses will take cold

LYDIA I do beseech him

A moment's grace Oh, mockery of wealth!
The third class passenger unchidden rides

Whither and when he will obsequious trams
Await him hourly subterranean tubes
With tireless coursers whisk him through the town,

But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their hay

BASHVILLE Madam, an omnibus to Euston Road,
And thence t' th' Angel—

Enter CASHEL

LYDIA Let us haste, my love.
The coachman is impatient

CASHEL Did he guess
He stays for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait
Pompei's sentinel Let us away
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,
Must ended be in merrie Islington

[Exeunt LYDIA and CASHEL]

BASHVILLE Gods! how she hangs on's arm!
I am alone

Now let me lift the cover from my soul
O wasted humbleness! Deluded diffidence!
How often have I said, Lie 'down, poor footman—

She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt
Thy powder to the sky And now, by Heaven,
She stoops below me, condescends upon
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,
Writ in my character from my last place,
Would damn me into ostlerdom And yet
Theres an eternal justice in it, for
By so much as the ne'er subdued Indian
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian
Precedence take of me "*Ich dien.*" Damna-
tion!

I serve My motto should have been, "I
scalp"

And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold
Because I love her I have blacked her boots,
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,
Doing in this the office of a boy,
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks
And does the meanest chares, I've shared the
passions

Of Cleopatra It has been my pride
To give her place the greater altitude
By lowering mine, and of her dignity
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace
As love for such a one as I would be
For such a one as she, and now! and now!
A prizefighter! O irony! O bathos!
To have made way for this! Oh, Bashville,

Bashville

Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,
So heavenly high of her? Let what will come,
My love must speak. twas my respect was
dumb

SCENE II

The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded with spectators In the arena a throne, with a boxing ring before it A balcony above on the right, occupied by persons of fashion—among others, Lydia and Lord Worthington Flourish Enter LUCIAN and CETEWAYO, with Chiefs in attendance

CETEWAYO Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?

LUCIAN It is

CETEWAYO Are these anæmic dogs the
English people?

LUCIAN Mislake us not for our complexions,
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our
factories,

And by the million patent kitchen ranges
Of happy English homes

CETEWAYO When first I came
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous
altars

Of some infernal god I now perceive
The English dare not look upon the sky
They are moles and owls. they call upon the
soot

To cover them

LUCIAN You cannot understand
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo
You are a savage, reasoning like a child
Each pallid English face conceals a brain
Whose powers are proven in the works of
Newton

And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear
There is not one of all the thousands here
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,
Would presently construct a steam engine,
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes

CETEWAYO Have I been brought a million
miles by sea

To learn how men can lie! Know, Father
Webber,

Men become civilized through twin diseases,
Terror and Greed to wit these two conjoined
Become the grisly parents of Invention
Why does the trembling white with frantic
toil

Of hand and brain produce the magic gun
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu
Dares look his foe i' the face, fights foot to

foot,
 Lives in the present, drains the Here and
 Now,
 Makes life a long reality, and death
 A moment only, whilst your Englishman
 Glares on his burning candle's winding-
 sheets,
 Counting the steps of his approaching doom,
 And in the murky corners ever sees
 Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty
 In the which anguish an unnatural edge
 Comes on his frightened brain, which straight
 devises
 Strange frauds by which to filch unearned
 gold,
 Mad crafts by which to slay unfacéd foes,
 Until at last his agonized desire
 Makes possibility its slave And then—
 Horrible climax! All-undoing spite!—
 Th' importunate clutching of the coward's
 hand
 From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets
 Doth wrest, when straight the brave black-
 livered man
 Is blown explosively from off the globe,
 And Death and Dread, with their white-
 livered slaves,
 Oer-run the earth, and through their chatter-
 ing teeth
 Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest"
 Enough of this I came not here to talk
 Thou sayst thou hast two white-faced ones
 who dare
 Fight without guns, and spearless, to the
 death
 Let them be brought
 LUCIAN - They fight not to the death,
 But under strictest rules as, for example,
 Half of their persons shall not be attacked,
 Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall
 down,
 Nor stroke of foot at any time And, further,
 That frequent opportunities of rest
 With succor and refreshment be secured
 them
 CETEWAYO Ye gods, what cowards! Zulu-
 land, my Zululand
 Personified Pusillanimity
 Hath taen thee from the bravest of the brave!
 LUCIAN Lo the rude savage whose un-
 tutored mind
 Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts
 That Brave and English mean the self-same
 thing!
 CETEWAYO Well, well, produce these

heroes I surmise
 They will be carried by their nurses, lest
 Some barking dog or bumbling bee should
 scare them
 CETEWAYO takes his state Enter PARADISE
 LYDIA What hateful wretch is this whose
 mighty thews
 Presage destruction to his adversaries
 LORD WORTHINGTON Tis Paradise
 LYDIA He of whom Cashel spoke?
 A dreadful thought ices my heart Oh, why
 Did Cashel leave us at the door?
 Enter CASHEL
 LORD WORTHINGTON Behold!
 The champion comes
 LYDIA Oh, I could kiss him now
 Here, before all the world His boxing things
 Render him most attractive But I fear
 Yon villan's fists may maul him
 WORTHINGTON Have no fear
 Hark! the king speaks
 CETEWAYO Ye sons of the white
 queen
 Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to
 PARADISE Your royal highness, you beholds
 a bloke
 What gets his living honest by his fists
 I may not have the polish of some toffs
 As I could mention on, but up to now
 No man has took my number down I scale
 Close on twelve stun, my age is twenty-three,
 And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub
 Am to be heard of any day by such
 As likes the job I dont know, governor,
 As ennythink remains for me to say
 CETEWAYO Six wives and thirty oxen shalt
 thou have
 If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead
 Methinks he looks full scornfully on thee
 [To Cashel] Ha! dost thou not so?
 CASHEL. Sir, I do beseech you
 To name the bone, or hmb, or special place
 Where you would have me hit him with this
 fist
 CETEWAYO Thou hast a noble brow, but
 much I fear
 Thine adversary will disfigure it
 CASHEL Theres a divinity that shapes our
 ends
 Rough hew them how we will Give me the
 gloves
 THE MASTER OF THE REVELS Paradise, a
 professor Cashel Byron,
 Also professor Time! [They spar
 LYDIA. Eternity

It seems to me until this fight be done

CASHEL Dread monarch this is called the upper cut,

And this a hook-hit of mine own invention
The hollow region where I plant this blow
Is called the mark My left, you will observe,
I chiefly use for long shots: with my right
Aiming beside the angle of the jaw
And landing with a certain delicate screw
I without violence knock my foeman out
Mark how he falls forward upon his face!
The rules allow ten seconds to get up,
And as the man is still quite silly, I
Might safely finish him, but my respect
For your most gracious majesty's desire
To see some further triumphs of the science
Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom

PARADISE How can a bloke do hussell proper justice

With pillows on his fists?

[*He tears off his gloves and attacks Cashel with his bare knuckles*]

THE CROWD Unfan! The rules!

CETEWAYO The joy of battle surges boiling up

And bids me join the mellay Isandhlana

And Victory! [*He falls on the bystanders*]

THE CHIEFS Victory and Isandhlana!

[*They run amok General panic and stampede The ring is swept away*]

LUCIAN Forbear these most irregular proceedings

Police! Police!

[*He engages Cetewayo with his umbrella. The balcony comes down with a crash. Screams from its occupants Indescribable confusion*]

CASHEL [*dragging Lydia from the struggling heap*] My love, my love, art hurt?

LYDIA No, no, but save my sore oer-matched cousin

A POLICEMAN Give us a lead, sir Save the English flag.

Africa tramples on it

CASHEL. Africa!

Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders
The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck
Shall trample on the blue with spots of white
Now, Lydia, mark thy lover [*He charges the Zulus.*]

LYDIA Hercules

Cannot withstand him See: the king is down,
The tallest chief is up, heels over head,
Tossed corklike oer my Cashel's sinewy back,
And his lieutenant all deflated gasps
For breath upon the sand The others fly

In vain, his fist oer magic distances

Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its mark,

And the last African upon his knees

Sues piteously for quarter [*Rushing into Cashel's arms*] Oh, my hero

Thoust saved us all this day

CASHEL 'Twas all for thee
CETEWAYO [*trying to rise*] Have I been struck by lightning?

LUCIAN Sir, your conduct
Can only be described as most ungentlemanly.

POLICEMAN One of the prone is white

CASHEL. 'Tis Paradise

POLICEMAN He's choking he has something in his mouth

LYDIA [*to Cashel*] Oh Heaven! there is blood upon your hip

You're hurt

CASHEL The morsel in yon wretch's mouth
Was bitten out of me

[*Sensation Lydia screams and swoons in Cashel's arms*]

ACT III

Wiltstoken A room in the Warren Lodge

Lydia at her writing-table

LYDIA O Past and Present, how ye do conflict

As here I sit writing my father's life!

The autumn woodland woos me from without

With whispering of leaves and dainty airs

To leave this fruitless haunting of the past.

My father was a very learned man

I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be

Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me

Enter POLICEMAN

POLICEMAN Asking your ladyship to pardon me

For this intrusion, might I be so bold

As ask a question of your people here

Concerning the Queen's peace?

LYDIA. My people here

Are but a footman and a simple maid,

And both have craved a holiday to join

Some local festival But, sir, your helmet

Proclaims the Metropolitan Police.

POLICEMAN Madam, it does, and I may now inform you

That what you term a local festival

Is a most hideous outrage gainst the law,

Which we to quell from London have come down

In short, a prizefight My sole purpose here
Is to inquire whether your ladyship
Any had characters this afternoon
Has noted in the neighbourhood

LYDIA No, none, sir
I had not let my maid go forth today
Thought I the roads unsafe

POLICEMAN Fear nothing, madam
The force protects the fair My mission here
Is to wreak ultion for the broken law
I wish your ladyship good afternoon

LYDIA Good afternoon [*Exit POLICEMAN*]
A prizefight! O my heart!
Cashel hast thou deceived me? Can it be
Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling
I asked thee to eschew?

O wretched maid,
Why didst thou flee from London to this place
To write thy father's life, whenas in town
Thou mightst have kept a guardian eye on
him—

Whats that? A flying footstep—

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL Sanctuary!
The law is on my track What! Lydia here!
LYDIA Ay Lydia here Hast thou done
murder, then,

That in so horrible a guise thou comest?

CASHEL Murder! I would I had. Yon
cannibal

Hath forty thousand lives, and I have taen
But thousands thirty-nine I tell thee, Lydia,
On the impenetrable sarcolobe
That holds his seedling brain these fists have
pounded

By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour This bruised
grass

And cakéd mud adhering to my form
I have acquired in rolling on the sod
Clinched in his grip This scanty reefer coat
For decency snatched up as fast I fled
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish
Tis all too short, hence my display of rib
And forearm mother-naked Be not wroth
Because I seem to wink at you by Heaven,
Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye
Which I perforce keep closing Pity me,
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything
I had hoped to win Oh, I could sit me
down

And weep for bitterness

LYDIA Thou wretch, begone

CASHEL Begone!

LYDIA I say begone Oh, tiger's

heart

Wrapped in a young man's hude, canst thou
not live

In love with Nature and at peace with Man?
Must thou, although thy hands were never
made

To blacken other's eyes, still batter at
The image of Divinity? I loathe thee
Hence from my house and never see me
more.

CASHEL I go The meanest lad on thy estate
Would not betray me thus But tis no matter
[*He opens the door*

Ha! the police I'm lost

[*He shuts the door again*

Now shalt thou see

My last fight fought Exhausted as I am,
To capture me will cost the coppers dear
Come one, come all!

LYDIA Oh, hide thee, I implore
I cannot see thee hunted down like this
There is my room Conceal thyself therein
Quick, I command [*He goes into the room*

With horror I foresee,

Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee

*Enter POLICEMAN, with PARADISE and
MELLISH in custody, BASHVILLE, con-
stables, and others*

POLICEMAN Keep back your bruised
prisoner lest he shock

Thus wellbred lady's nerves Your pardon,
maam,

But have you seen by chance the other one?
In this direction he was seen to run

LYDIA A man came here anon with bloody
hands

And aspect that did turn my soul to snow

POLICEMAN Twas he What said he?

LYDIA Begged for sanctuary

I bade the man begone

POLICEMAN Most properly

Saw you which way he went?

LYDIA I cannot tell

PARADISE He seen me coming, and he done
a bunk.

POLICEMAN Peace, there Excuse his
damaged features, lady

He's Paradise, and this one's Byron's trainer,
Mellish

MELLISH Injurious copper, in thy teeth

I hurl the lie I am no trainer, I

My father, a respected missionary,

Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age

T' the poetry writing To these woods I came

With Nature to commune My revery
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled
Mindful of what my sainted parent taught
I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo!
These minions of the law laid hands on me

BASHVILLE A lovely woman, with distracted
cries,

In most resplendent fashionable frock,
Approaches like a wounded antelope

Enter ADELAIDE GISBORNE

ADELAIDE Where is my Cashel? Hath he
been arrested?

POLICEMAN I would I had thy Cashel by
the collar.

He hath escaped me

ADELAIDE Praises be for ever!

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man
thy Cashel?

ADELAIDE He is mine only son

ALL Thy son!

ADELAIDE My son

LYDIA I thought his mother hardly would
have known him,

So crushed his countenance

ADELAIDE A ribald peer,
Lord Worthington by name, this morning
came

With honeyed words beseeching me to
mount

His four-in-hand, and to the country hie
To see some English sport Being by nature
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,
But took so long to dress that the design
Failed of its full effect, for not until
The final round we reached the horrid scene
Be silent, all, for now I do approach
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,
That Heaven did bless me with an only son,
A boy devoted to his doting mother—

POLICEMAN Hark! did you hear an oath
from yonder room?

ADELAIDE. Respect a broken-hearted
mother's grief,

And do not interrupt me in my scene
Ten years ago my darling disappeared
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous
tears,

Tears that have left me prematurely aged,
For I am younger far than I appear)
Judge of my anguish when today I saw
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a
demon

With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son!

ALL. O strange event! O passing tearful

tale!

ADELAIDE. I thank you from the bottom
of my heart

For the reception you have given my woe,
And now I ask, where is my wretched son?
He must at once come home with me, and
quit

A course of life that cannot be allowed

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL Policeman I do yield me to the
law.

LYDIA Oh no.

ADELAIDE. My son!

CASHEL My mother! Do not kiss me.
My visage is too sore

POLICEMAN. The lady hid him

This is a regular plant You cannot be
Up to that sex [*To Cashel*] You come along
with me

LYDIA Fear not, my Cashel I will bail thee
out

CASHEL Never. I do embrace my doom
with joy

With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland
I shall feel safe there are no mothers there.

ADELAIDE Ungracious boy—

CASHEL Constable bear me hence.

MELLISH Oh, let me sweetest reconcile-
ment make

By calling to thy mind that moving song —
[*Sings*] They say there is no other—

CASHEL Forbear at once, or the next note
of music

That falls upon thine ear shall clang in
thunder

From the last trumpet

ADELAIDE A disgraceful threat
To level at this virtuous old man

LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scornst thy
mother thus,

How wilt thou treat thy wife?

CASHEL. There spake my fate.
I knew you would say that Oh, mothers,
mothers,

Would you but let your wretched sons alone
Life were worth living! Had I any choice
In this importunate relationship?

None. And until that high auspicious day
When the millennium on an orphaned world
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother
And I within the self-same hemisphere
Conjointly may not dwell

ADELAIDE Ungentlemanly!

CASHEL. I am no gentleman I am a criminal,

And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate
[*Aloud*] And now, my friends, gentle and
simple both,

Our scene draws to a close In lawful course
As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I
Do pardon all concerned this afternoon
In the late gross and brutal exhibition
Of muscalled sport

LYDIA [*throwing herself into his arms*] Your
boats are burnt at last

CASHIEL This is the face that burnt a
thousand boats,
And ravished Cashiel Byron from the ring
But to conclude Let William Paradise
Devote himself to science, and acquire,
By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,

A more refined address You, Robert Mellish,
To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him;
Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson
Limit his access to the fatal tap
Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,
And to St George's Church, whose portico
Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit
Street,

Repair we all. Strike up the wedding march;
And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth
Broad o'er the wold as fast we bowl along.
Give me the post-horn Loose the flowing
rein;

And up to London drive with might and
main. [Exeunt

THE END

XXXV

PRESS CUTTINGS

A TOPICAL SKETCH COMPILED FROM THE EDITORIAL AND
CORRESPONDENCE COLUMNS OF THE DAILY PAPERS DURING
THE WOMEN'S WAR IN 1909

*The forenoon of the first of April, three years
hence*

*General Mitchener is at his writing-table in
the War Office, opening letters On his left is the
fireplace, with a fire burning On his right,
against the opposite wall, is a standing desk with
an office stool The door is in the wall behind him,
half way between the table and the desk. The
table is not quite in the middle of the room: it is
nearer to the hearthrug than to the desk There is
a chair at each end of it for persons having busi-
ness with the General There is a telephone on the
table*

Long silence

A VOICE FROM THE STREET Votes for Women!

*The General starts convulsively, snatches a
revolver from a drawer, and listens in an agony
of apprehension Nothing happens He puts the
revolver back, ashamed, wipes his brow; and re-
sumes his work He is startled afresh by the entry
of an Orderly This Orderly is an unsoldierly,
slovenly, discontented young man*

MITCHENER Oh, it's only you Well?

THE ORDERLY Another one, sir She's
chained herself

MITCHENER Chained herself? How? To what?
We've taken away the railings and everything
that a chain can be passed through

THE ORDERLY We forgot the door-scraper,
sir She lay down on the flags and got the
chain through before she started hollerin
She's lyn there now, and she downfaces us
that you've got the key of the padlock in a
letter in a buff envelope, and that you'll see
her when you open it

MITCHENER She's mad Have the scraper
dug up and let her go home with it hanging
round her neck

THE ORDERLY. There is a buff envelope
there, sir

MITCHENER You're all afraid of these women.
[*He picks the letter up*] It does seem to have a
key in it [*He opens the letter; takes out a key
and a note, and reads*] "Dear Mitch"—Well,
I'm dashed!

THE ORDERLY Yes, sir

MITCHENER What do you mean by Yes, sir?

THE ORDERLY Well, you said you was
dashed, sir, and you did look—if you'll excuse
my saying it, sir—well, you looked it

MITCHENER [*who has been reading the letter,
and is too astonished to attend to the Orderly's
reply*] This is a letter from the Prime Minister
asking me to release the woman with this key
if she padlocks herself, and to have her shewn
up and see her at once

THE ORDERLY [*tremulously*] Dont do it, governor

MITCHENER [*angrily*] How often have I ordered you not to address me as governor? Remember that you are a soldier and not a vulgar civilian Remember also that when a man enters the army he leaves fear behind him Heres the key Unlock her and shew her up

THE ORDERLY Me unlock her! I dursent Lord knows what she'd do to me

MITCHENER [*pepperily, rising*] Obey your orders instantly, sir, and dont presume to argue Even if she kills you, it is your duty to die for your country Right about face March
The Orderly goes out, trembling

THE VOICE OUTSIDE Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women!

MITCHENER [*mimicking her*] Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women! [*In his natural voice*] Votes for children! Votes for babies! Votes for monkeys! [*He posts himself on the hearthrug and awaits the enemy*]

THE ORDERLY [*outside*] In you go [*He pushes a panting Suffraget into the room*] The person, sir [*He withdraws*]

The Suffraget takes off her tailor-made skirt and reveals a pair of fashionable trousers

MITCHENER [*horrified*] Stop, madam What are you doing? you must not undress in my presence I protest Not even your letter from the Prime Minister—

THE SUFFRAGET My dear Mitchener I am the Prime Minister [*He takes off his hat and cloak, throws them on the desk, and confronts the General in the ordinary costume of a Cabinet Minister*]

MITCHENER Good heavens! Balsquith!

BALSQUITH [*throwing himself into Mitchener's chair*] Yes it is indeed Balsquith It has come to this that the only way the Prime Minister of England can get from Downing Street to the War Office is by assuming this disguise, shrieking "VOTES FOR WOMEN", and chaining himself to your doorscraper They were at the corner in force They cheered me Bella-christina herself was there She shook my hand and told me to say I was a vegetarian, as the diet was better in Holloway for vegetarians

MITCHENER Why didn't you telephone?

BALSQUITH They tap the telephone Every switchboard in London is in their hands, or in those of their young men

MITCHENER Where on earth did you get

the dress? I hope it's not a French dress!

BALSQUITH Great heavens, no We're not allowed even to put on our gloves with French chalk. Everything's labelled "Made in Camberwell"

MITCHENER As a Tariff Reformer, I must say Quite right [*Balsquith has a strong controversial impulse and is evidently going to dispute this profession of faith*] No matter Dont argue What have you come for?

BALSQUITH Sandstone has resigned

MITCHENER [*amazed*] Old Red resigned!

BALSQUITH Resigned

MITCHENER But how? Why? Oh, impossible! the proclamation of martial law last Tuesday made Sandstone virtually Dictator in the metropolis, and to resign now is flat desertion

BALSQUITH Yes, yes, my dear Mitchener I know all that as well as you do I argued with him until I was black in the face, and he so red about the neck that if I had gone on he would have burst He is furious because we have abandoned his plan

MITCHENER But you accepted it unconditionally

BALSQUITH Yes, before we knew what it was It was unworkable, you know

MITCHENER I dont know Why is it unworkable?

BALSQUITH I mean the part about drawing a cordon round Westminster at a distance of two miles, and turning all women out of it

MITCHENER A masterpiece of strategy Let me explain The Suffragets are a very small body, but they are numerous enough to be troublesome—even dangerous—when they are all concentrated in one place—say in Parliament Square But by making a two-mile radius and pushing them beyond it, you scatter their attack over a circular line twelve miles long Just what Wellington would have done

BALSQUITH But the women wont go

MITCHENER Nonsense they must go

BALSQUITH They wont

MITCHENER What does Sandstone say?

BALSQUITH He says Shoot them down

MITCHENER Of course

BALSQUITH Youre not serious?

MITCHENER I'm perfectly serious

BALSQUITH But you cant shoot them down! Women, you know!

MITCHENER [*straddling confidently*] Yes you can Strange as it may seem to you as a

civilian, Balsquith, if you point a rifle at a woman and fire it, she will drop exactly as a man drops

BALSQUITH But suppose your own daughters—Helen and Georgina—

MITCHENER My daughters would not dream of disobeying the proclamation [*As an after-thought*] At least Helen wouldnt

BALSQUITH But Georgina?

MITCHENER. Georgina would if she knew she'd be shot if she didnt Thats how the thing would work Military methods are really the most merciful in the end. You keep sending these misguided women to Holloway and killing them slowly and inhumanly by ruining their health, and it does no good they go on worse than ever Shoot a few promptly and humanely, and there will be an end at once of all resistance and of all the suffering that resistance entails

BALSQUITH But public opinion would never stand it

MITCHENER [*talking about and laying down the law*] Theres no such thing as public opinion

BALSQUITH No such thing as public opinion!

MITCHENER Absolutely no such thing There are certain persons who entertain certain opinions Well, shoot them down. When you have shot them down, there are no longer any persons entertaining those opinions alive, consequently there is no longer any more of the public opinion you are so much afraid of Grasp that fact, my dear Balsquith, and you have grasped the secret of government Public opinion is mind Mind is inseparable from matter Shoot down the matter and you kill the mind

BALSQUITH But hang it all—

MITCHENER [*intolerantly*] No I wont hang it all It's no use coming to me and talking about public opinion. You have put yourself into the hands of the army, and you are committed to military methods And the basis of all military methods is that when people wont do what theyre told to do, you shoot them down

BALSQUITH Oh yes; it's all jolly fine for you and Old Red You dont depend on votes for your places What do you suppose would happen at the next election?

MITCHENER Have no next election. Bring in a Bill at once repealing all the Reform Acts and vesting the Government in a properly trained magistracy responsible only to a Council of War. It answers perfectly in India.

If anyone objects, shoot him down

BALSQUITH But none of the members of my party would be on the Council of War Neither should I. Do you expect us to vote for making ourselves nobodies?

MITCHENER Youll have to, sooner or later, or the Socialists will make nobodies of the lot of you by collaring every penny you possess. Do you suppose this damned democracy can be allowed to go on now that the mob is beginning to take it seriously and using its power to lay hands on property? Parliament must abolish itself The Irish parliament voted for its own extinction The English parliament will do the same if the same means are taken to persuade it.

BALSQUITH. That would cost a lot of money

MITCHENER Not money necessarily Bribe them with titles.

BALSQUITH Do you think we dare?

MITCHENER [*scornfully*] Dare! Dare! What is life but daring, man? "To dare, to dare, and again to dare—"

FEWALE VOICE IN THE STREET Votes for Women! [*Mitchener, revolver in hand, rushes to the door and locks it Balsquith hides under the table*] Votes for Women!

A shot is heard

BALSQUITH [*emerging in the greatest alarm*] Good heavens, you havnt given orders to fire on them have you?

MITCHENER No, but it's a sentinel's duty to fire on anyone who persists in attempting to pass without giving the word

BALSQUITH [*rubbing his brow*] This military business is really awful.

MITCHENER Be calm, Balsquith. These things must happen they save bloodshed in the long run, believe me Ive seen plenty of it, and I know

BALSQUITH I havnt; and I dont know I wish those guns didnt make such a devil of a noise We must adopt Maxim's Silencer for the army rifles if we're going to shoot women I really couldnt stand hearing it. [*Someone outside tries to open the door and then knocks*] Whats that?

MITCHENER Who's there?

THE ORDERLY It's only me, governor It's all right

MITCHENER [*unlocking the door and admitting the Orderly, who comes between them*] What was it?

THE ORDERLY Suffraget, sir

BALSQUITH Did the sentry shoot her?

THE ORDERLY No, sir she shot the sentry
BALSQUITH [*relieved*] Oh is that all?

MITCHENER [*most indignantly*] All! A civilian shoots down one of His Majesty's soldiers on duty, and the Prime Minister of England asks, Is that all?! Have you no regard for the sanctity of human life?

BALSQUITH [*much relieved*] Well, getting shot is what a soldier is for Besides, he doesn't vote

MITCHENER Neither do the Suffragets

BALSQUITH Their husbands do [*To the Orderly*] Did she kill him?

THE ORDERLY No, sir He got a stinger on his trousers, sir, but it didn't penetrate He lost his temper a bit and put down his gun and clouted her head for her So she said he was no gentleman, and we let her go, thinking she'd had enough, sir

MITCHENER [*groaning*] Clouted her head! These women are making the army as lawless as themselves Clouted her head indeed! A purely civil procedure

THE ORDERLY Any orders, sir?

MITCHENER. No Yes No Yes send everybody who took part in this disgraceful scene to the guard-room No I'll address the men on the subject after lunch Parade them for that purpose full kit Don't grin at me, sir Right about face March

The Orderly obeys and goes out

BALSQUITH [*taking Mitchener affectionately by the arm and walking him persuasively to and fro*] And now, Mitchener, will you come to the rescue of the Government and take the command that Old Red has thrown up?

MITCHENER How can I? You know that the people are devoted heart and soul to Sandstone He is only bringing you "on the knee," as we say in the army Could any other living man have persuaded the British nation to accept universal compulsory military service as he did last year? Why, even the Church refused exemption He is supreme—omnipotent

BALSQUITH He was, a year ago But ever since your book of reminiscences went into two more editions than his, and the rush for it led to the wrecking of the Times Book Club, you have become to all intents and purposes his senior He lost ground by saying that the wrecking was got up by the book-sellers It shewed jealousy, and the public felt it

MITCHENER But I cracked him up in my

book—you see I could do no less after the handsome way he cracked me up in his—and I can't go back on it now [*Breaking loose from Balsquith*] No it's no use, Balsquith he can dictate his terms to you

BALSQUITH Not a bit of it That affair of the curate—

MITCHENER [*impatiently*] Oh, damn that curate I've heard of nothing but that wretched mutineer for a fortnight past He's not a curate, whilst he's serving in the army he's a private soldier and nothing else I really haven't time to discuss him further I'm busy Good morning [*He sits down at his table and takes up his letters*].

BALSQUITH [*near the door*] I'm sorry you take that tone, Mitchener Since you do take it, let me tell you frankly that I think Lieutenant Chubbs-Jenkinson shewed a great want of consideration for the Government in giving an unreasonable and unpopular order, and bringing compulsory military service into disrepute

MITCHENER No order is unreasonable, and all orders are unpopular

BALSQUITH When the leader of the Labor Party appealed to me and to the House last year not to throw away all the liberties of Englishmen by accepting compulsory military service without full civil rights for the soldier—

MITCHENER Rot

BALSQUITH —I said that no British officer would be capable of abusing the authority with which it was absolutely necessary to invest him

MITCHENER Quite right

BALSQUITH That carried the House,—

MITCHENER Naturally

BALSQUITH —and the feeling was that the Labor Party were soulless cads

MITCHENER So they are

BALSQUITH And now comes this unmanly young whelp Chubbs-Jenkinson, the only son of what they call a soda king, and orders a curate to lick his boots And when the curate punches his head, you first sentence him to be shot, and then make a great show of clemency by commuting it to a flogging What did you expect the curate to do?

MITCHENER [*throwing down his pen and his letters and jumping up to confront Balsquith*] His duty was perfectly simple He should have obeyed the order, and then laid his complaint against the officer in proper form He would

have received the fullest satisfaction.

BALSQUITH What satisfaction?

MITCHENER. Chubbs-Jenkinson would have been reprimanded In fact, he was reprimanded Besides, the man was thoroughly insubordinate. You cant deny that the very first thing he did when they took him down after flogging him was to walk up to Chubbs-Jenkinson and break his jaw That shewed there was no use flogging him, so now he will get two years' hard labor, and serve him right!

BALSQUITH I bet you a guinea he wont get even a week I bet you another that Chubbs-Jenkinson apologizes abjectly You evidently havnt heard the news

MITCHENER What news?

BALSQUITH It turns out that the curate is well connected. [*Mitchener staggers at the shock. He reels into his chair and buries his face in his hands over the blotter*] He has three aunts in the peerage, Lady Richmond's one of them [*Mitchener punctuates these announcements with heartrending groans*], and they all adore him The invitations for six garden parties and fourteen dances have been cancelled for all the subalterns in Chubb's regiment. [*Mitchener attempts to shoot himself*]

BALSQUITH [*seizing the pistol*] No. your country needs you, Mitchener

MITCHENER [*putting down the pistol*] For my country's sake [*Balsquith, reassured, sits down*]. But what an infernal young fool Chubbs-Jenkinson is, not to know the standing of his man better! Why didnt he know? It was his business to know He ought to be flogged

BALSQUITH Probably he will be, by the other subalterns

MITCHENER I hope so Anyhow, out he goes Out of the army He or I

BALSQUITH Steady, steady His father has subscribed a million to the party funds We owe him a peerage

MITCHENER. I dont care

BALSQUITH. I do How do you think parties are kept up? Not by the subscriptions of the local associations, I hope They dont pay for the gas at the meetings.

MITCHENER Man can you not be serious? Here are we, face to face with Lady Richmond's grave displeasure, and you talk to me about gas and subscriptions Her own nephew!!!!

BALSQUITH [*gloomily*] It's unfortunate. He

was at Oxford with Bobby Bessborough

MITCHENER Worse and worse What shall we do?

A VOICE IN THE STREET Votes for Women! Votes for Women!

A terrific explosion shakes the building They take no notice

MITCHENER [*breaking down*] You dont know what this means to me, Balsquith I love the army I love my country.

BALSQUITH It certainly is rather awkward *The Orderly comes in.*

MITCHENER [*angrily*] What is it? How dare you interrupt us like this?

THE ORDERLY. Didn't you hear the explosion, sir?

MITCHENER Explosion What explosion? No I heard no explosion: I have something more serious to attend to than explosions Great heavens! Lady Richmond's nephew has been treated like any common laborer; and while England is reeling under the shock, a private walks in and asks me if I heard an explosion

BALSQUITH By the way, what was the explosion?

THE ORDERLY. Only a sort of bombshell, sir.

BALSQUITH. Bombshell!

THE ORDERLY. A pasteboard one, sir Full of papers with Votes for Women in red letters Fired into the yard from the roof of the Alliance Office.

MITCHENER Pooh! Go away. GO away.

The Orderly, bewildered, goes out

BALSQUITH Mitchener you can save the country yet Put on your full dress uniform and your medals and orders and so forth Get a guard of honor—something showy—horse guards or something of that sort, and call on the old girl—

MITCHENER The old girl?

BALSQUITH Well, Lady Richmond Apologize to her Ask her leave to accept the command. Tell her that youve made the curate your adjutant or your aide-de-camp or whatever is the proper thing By the way, what can you make him?

MITCHENER I might make him my chaplain I dont see why I shouldnt have a chaplain on my staff He shewed a very proper spirit in punching that young cub's head I should have done the same myself

BALSQUITH Then Ive your promise to take command if Lady Richmond consents?

MITCHENER On condition that I have a free

hand. No nonsense about public opinion or democracy

BALSQUITH As far as possible, I think I may say yes

MITCHENER [*rising intolerantly and going to the hearthrug*] That wont do for me Dont be weak-kneed, Balsquith You know perfectly well that the real government of this country is and always must be the government of the masses by the classes You know that democracy is damned nonsense, and that no class stands less of it than the working class You know that we are already discussing the steps that will have to be taken if the country should ever be face to face with the possibility of a Labor majority in Parliament You know that in that case we should disfranchise the mob, and if they made a fuss, shoot them down You know that if we need public opinion to support us, we can get any quantity of it manufactured in our papers by poor devils of journalists who will sell their souls for five shillings You know—

BALSQUITH Stop Stop, I say I dont know That is the difference between your job and mine, Mitchener After twenty years in the army a man thinks he knows everything After twenty months in the Cabinet he knows that he knows nothing

MITCHENER We learn from history—

BALSQUITH We learn from history that men never learn anything from history That's not my own it's Hegel

MITCHENER Who's Hegel?

BALSQUITH Dead. A German philosopher [*He half rises, but recollects something and sits down again*] Oh, confound it that reminds me The Germans have laid down four more Dreadnoughts

MITCHENER Then you must lay down twelve

BALSQUITH Oh yes it's easy to say that, but think of what they'll cost

MITCHENER Think of what it would cost to be invaded by Germany and forced to pay an indemnity of five hundred millions

BALSQUITH But you said that if you got compulsory military service there would be an end of the danger of invasion

MITCHENER On the contrary, my dear fellow, it increases the danger tenfold, because it increases German jealousy of our military supremacy

BALSQUITH After all, why should the Germans invade us?

MITCHENER Why shouldnt they? What else has their army to do? What else are they building a navy for?

BALSQUITH Well, we never think of invading Germany

MITCHENER Yes, we do I have thought of nothing else for the last ten years Say what you will, Balsquith, the Germans have never recognized, and until they get a stern lesson they never will recognize, the plain fact that the interests of the British Empire are paramount, and that the command of the sea belongs by nature to England

BALSQUITH But if they wont recognize it, what can I do?

MITCHENER Shoot them down

BALSQUITH I cant shoot them down

MITCHENER Yes you can You dont realize it, but if you fire a rifle into a German he drops just as surely as a rabbit does

BALSQUITH But dash it all, man, a rabbit hasnt got a rifle and a German has Suppose he shoots you down

MITCHENER Excuse me, Balsquith, but that consideration is what we call cowardice in the army A soldier always assumes that he is going to shoot, not to be shot

BALSQUITH [*jumping up and walking about sulkily*] Oh come! I like to hear you military people talking of cowardice Why, you spend your lives in an ecstasy of terror of imaginary invasions I dont believe you ever go to bed without looking under it for a burglar

MITCHENER [*calmly*] A very sensible precaution, Balsquith I always take it, and, in consequence, Ive never been burgled

BALSQUITH Neither have I Anyhow, dont you taunt me with cowardice [*He posts himself on the hearthrug beside Mitchener, on his left*] I never look under my bed for a burglar I'm not always looking under the nation's bed for an invader And if it comes to fighting, I'm quite willing to fight without being three to one

MITCHENER These are the romantic ravings of a Jingo civilian, Balsquith At least youll not deny that the absolute command of the sea is essential to our security

BALSQUITH The absolute command of the sea is essential to the security of the principality of Monaco But Monaco isnt going to get it

MITCHENER And consequently Monaco enjoys no security What a frightful thing! How do the inhabitants sleep with the possibility of invasion, of bombardment, continually

present to their minds? Would you have our English slumbers broken in the same way? Are we also to live without security?

BALSQUITH [*dogmatically*] Yes. There's no such thing as security in the world, and there never can be as long as men are mortal. England will be secure when England is dead, just as the streets of London will be safe when there's no longer a man in her streets to be run over or a vehicle to run over him. When you military chaps ask for security you are crying for the moon.

MITCHENER [*very seriously*] Let me tell you, Balsquith, that in these days of aeroplanes and Zeppelin airships the question of the moon is becoming one of the greatest importance. It will be reached at no very distant date. Can you, as an Englishman, tamely contemplate the possibility of having to live under a German moon? The British flag must be planted there at all hazards.

BALSQUITH My dear Mitchener, the moon is outside practical politics. I'd swap it for a coal-gas station tomorrow with Germany or any other Power sufficiently military in its way of thinking to attach any importance to it.

MITCHENER [*losing his temper*] You are the friend of every country but your own.

BALSQUITH Say nobody's enemy but my own. It sounds nicer. You really needn't be so horribly afraid of the other countries. They're all in the same fix as we are. I'm much more interested in the death-rate in Lambeth than in the German fleet.

MITCHENER You daren't say that in Lambeth.

BALSQUITH I'll say it the day after you publish your scheme for invading Germany and repealing all the Reform Acts.

The Orderly comes in

MITCHENER What do you want?

THE ORDERLY I don't want anything, governor, thank you. The secretary and president of the Anti-Suffraget League says they had an appointment with the Prime Minister, and that they've been sent on here from Downing Street.

BALSQUITH [*going to the table*] Quite right. I forgot them. [*To Mitchener*] Would you mind my seeing them here? I feel extraordinarily grateful to these women for standing by us and facing the Suffragets, especially as they are naturally the gentler and timider sort of women. [*The Orderly moans*] Did you say

anything?

THE ORDERLY No, sir.

BALSQUITH Did you catch their names?

THE ORDERLY Yes, sir. The president is Lady Corinthia Fanshawe; and the secretary is Mrs Banger.

MITCHENER [*abruptly*] Mrs what?

THE ORDERLY Mrs Banger.

BALSQUITH Curious that quiet people always seem to have violent names.

THE ORDERLY Not much quiet about her, sir.

MITCHENER [*outraged*] Attention! Speak when you're spoken to. Hold your tongue when you're not. Right about face. March. [*The Orderly obeys*] That's the way to keep these chaps up to the mark. [*The Orderly returns*] Back again! What do you mean by this mutiny?

THE ORDERLY What am I to say to the ladies, sir?

BALSQUITH You don't mind my seeing them somewhere, do you?

MITCHENER Not at all. Bring them in to see me when you've done with them. I understand that Lady Corinthia is a very fascinating woman. Who is she, by the way?

BALSQUITH Daughter of Lord Broadstairs, the automatic turbine man. Gave quarter of a million to the party funds. She's musical and romantic and all that—don't hunt. Hates politics. Stops in town all the year round. One never sees her except at the opera and at musical at-homes and so forth.

MITCHENER What a life! [*To the Orderly*] Where are the ladies?

THE ORDERLY In No. 17, sir.

MITCHENER Shew Mr Balsquith there, and send Mrs Farrell here.

THE ORDERLY [*calling into the corridor*] Mrs Farrell! [*To Balsquith*] This way, sir. [*He goes out with Balsquith*]

Mrs Farrell, a lean, highly respectable Irish charwoman of about fifty, comes in.

MITCHENER Mrs Farrell. I've a very important visit to pay. I shall want my full dress uniform and all my medals and orders and my presentation sword. There was a time when the British Army contained men capable of discharging these duties for their commanding officer. Those days are over. The compulsorily enlisted soldier runs to a woman for everything. I'm therefore reluctantly obliged to trouble you.

MRS FARRELL Your meddles n ordhers n the

crooked sword with the ivory handle n your full dress uniform is in the waxworks in the Chamber o Military Glory over in the place they used to call the Banquetin Hall I told you you'd be sorry for sendin them away, and you told me to mind me own business You're wiser now

MITCHENER I am I had not at that time discovered that you were the only person in the whole military establishment of this capital who could be trusted to remember where anything was, or to understand an order and obey it

MRS FARRELL It's no good flattherin me I'm too old

MITCHENER Not at all, Mrs Farrell How is your daughter?

MRS FARRELL Which daughter?

MITCHENER The one who has made such a gratifying success in the Music Halls

MRS FARRELL. There's no Music Halls now-a-days they're Variety Theatres She's got an offer of marriage from a young jook

MITCHENER. Is it possible? What did you do?

MRS FARRELL I told his mother on him

MITCHENER Oh! What did she say?

MRS FARRELL She was as pleased as Punch Thank Heaven, she says, he's got somebody that'll be able to keep him when the supertax is put up to twenty shillings in the pound

MITCHENER But your daughter herself? What did she say?

MRS FARRELL. Accepted him, of course What else would a young fool like her do? He introjooiced her to the Poet Laureate, thinkin she'd inspire him

MITCHENER Did she?

MRS FARRELL. Faith, I dunna All I know is she walked up to him as bold as brass n said, "Write me a sketch, dear" Afther all the throuble I've took with that child's manners she's no more notion how to behave herself than a pig You'll have to wear General Sandstone's uniform it's the only one in the place, because he wont lend it to the shows

MITCHENER But Sandstone's clothes wont fit me

MRS FARRELL [unmoved] Then you'll have to fit them Why shouldnt they fitchya as well as they fitted General Blake at the Mansion House?

MITCHENER They didnt fit him He looked a frightful guy

MRS FARRELL. Well, you must do the best

you can with them You cant exhibit your clothes and wear them too

MITCHENER And the public thinks the lot of a commanding officer a happy one! Oh, if they could only see the seamy side of it [*He returns to his table to resume work*]

MRS FARRELL If they could only see the seamy side o General Sandstone's uniform, where his flask rubs agen the buckle of his braces, they'd tell him he ought to get a new one Let alone the way he swears at me

MITCHENER When a man has risked his life on eight battlefields, Mrs Farrell, he has given sufficient proof of his self-control to be excused a little strong language

MRS FARRELL Would you put up with bad language from me because I've risked me life eight times in chuldbed?

MITCHENER My dear Mrs Farrell, you surely would not compare a risk of that harmless domestic kind to the fearful risks of the battlefield.

MRS FARRELL I wouldnt compare risks run to bear livin people into the world to risks run to blow dhem out of it A mother's risk is jooty a soldier's is nothin but divilmunt

MITCHENER [nettled] Let me tell you, Mrs Farrell, that if the men did not fight, the women would have to fight themselves We spare you that at all events

MRS FARRELL. You cant help yourselves If three-quarters of you was killed we could replace you with the help of the other quarter If three-quarters of us was killed how many people would there be in England in another generation? If it wasnt for that, the men'd put the fighting on us just as they put all the other dhrudgery What would you do if we was all kilt? Would you go to bed and have twins?

MITCHENER Really, Mrs Farrell, you must discuss these questions with a medical man You make me blush, positively

MRS FARRELL [grumbling to herself] A good job too If I could have made Farrell blush I wouldnt have had to risk me life so often You n your risks n your bravery n your self-conthrol indeed! "Why dont you conthrol yourself?" I sez to Farrell "It's agen me religion," he sez

MITCHENER [plantively] Mrs Farrell you're a woman of very powerful mind I'm not qualified to argue these delicate matters with you I ask you to spare me, and to be good enough to take these clothes to Mr

Balsquith when the ladies leave.

The Orderly comes in.

THE ORDERLY Lady Cornthia Fanshawe and Mrs Banger want to see you, sir Mr Balsquith told me to tell you

MRS FARRELL Theyve come about the vote I dont know whether it's dhem dhat want it or dhem dhat doesnt want it. anyhow, theyre all ahke when they get into a state about it. [*She goes out, having gathered Balsquith's Suffraget disguise from the desk*]

MITCHENER Is Mr Balsquith not with them.

THE ORDERLY. No, sir. Couldn't stand Mrs Banger, I expect. Fair caution she is [*Chuckling*] Couldnt help larfin when I sor im op it.

MITCHENER [*highly incensed*] How dare you indulge in this unseemly mirth in the presence of your commanding officer? Have you no sense of a soldier's duty?

THE ORDERLY [*sadly*] I'm afraid I shant ever get the ang of it, sir. You see, my father has a tidy little barber's business down off Shore-ditch, and I was brought up to be chatty and easy-like with everybody I tell you, when I drew the number in the conscription it gev my old mother the needle and it gev me the ump I should take it very kind, sir, if youd let me off the drill and let me shave you instead Youd appreciate my qualities then: you would indeed, sir I shant never do myself justice at soljerm, sir I cant bring myself to think of it as proper work for a man with an active mind, as you might say, sir. Arf of it's only ousemaidin; and tother arf is dress-up and make-believe

MITCHENER. Stuff, sir. It's the easiest life in the world Once you learn your drill, all you have to do is to hold your tongue and obey your orders.

THE ORDERLY But I do assure you, sir, arf the time theyre the wrong orders; and I get into trouble when I obey them The sergeant's orders is all right, but the officers dont know what theyre talkin about Why, the orses knows better sometimes "Fours," says Lieutenant Trevor at the gate of Bucknam Palace only this mornin when we was on dooty for a State visit to the Coal Trust I was fourth man like in the first file; and when I started the orse eld back, and the sergeant was on to me straight. Threes, you bally fool, e whispers An e was on to me again about it when we come back, and called me a fathead, e did What am I to do, I says the lieutenant's orders was fours, I says I'll shew you who's

lieutenant here, e says. In future you attend to my orders and not to iz, e says. what does e know about it? e says You didnt give me any orders, I says Couldnt you see for yourself there wasnt room for fours, e says: why cant you think? General Mitchener tells me I'm not to think, but to obey orders, I says Is Mitchener your sergeant or am I? e says in his bullyin way. You are, I says Well, e says, you got to do what your sergeant tells you: thats discipline, e says And what am I to do for the General? I says Youre to let him talk, e says: thats what e's for

MITCHENER [*groaning*] It is impossible for the human mind to conceive anything more dreadful than this Youre a disgrace to the service.

THE ORDERLY [*deeply wounded*] The service is a disgrace to me. When my mother's people pass me in the street with this uniform on, I arldly know which way to look There never was a soldier in my family before.

MITCHENER There never was anything else in mine, sir

THE ORDERLY. My mother's second cousin was one of the Parkinsons o Stepney. [*Almost in tears*] What do you know of the feelings of a resepectable family in the middle station of life? I cant bear to be looked down on as a common soldier. Why cant my father be let buy my discharge? Youve done away with the soldier's right to ave his discharge bought for him by his relations. The country didnt know you were going to do that or it'd never ave stood it Is an Englishman to be made a mockery like this?

MITCHENER Silence Attention Right about face March

THE ORDERLY [*retiring to the standing desk and bedewing it with passionate tears*] Oh that I should have lived to be spoke to as if I was the lowest of the low! Me! that has shaved a City o London alderman wiv me own and

MITCHENER. Poltroon Crybaby. Well, better disgrace yourself here than disgrace your country on the field of battle

THE ORDERLY [*angrily coming to the table*] Who's going to disgrace his country on the field of battle? It's not fightin I object to: it's soljerm Shew me a German and I'll ave a go at him as fast as you or any man. But to ave me time wasted like this, an be stuck in a sentry-box at a street corner for an ornament to be stared at; and to be told

"right about face march," if I speak as one man to another that ant pluck that ant fightin that ant patriotism it's bein made a bloomin sheep of

MITCHENER A sheep has many valuable military quahties Emulate them, dont disparage them

THE ORDERLY Oh, wots the good of talkin to you? If I wasnt a poor soldier I could punch your ed for forty shillins or a month But because youre my commandin officer you deprive me of my right to a magistrate, and make a compliment of giving me two years ard stead o shootin me Why cant you take your chance the same as any civilian does?

MITCHENER [*rising majestically*] I search the pages of history in vain for a parallel to such a speech made by a private to a General But for the coherence of your remarks I should conclude that you were drunk As it is, you must be mad You shall be placed under restraint at once Call the guard

THE ORDERLY Call your grandmother If you take one man off the doors the place'll be full of Suffragets before you can wink

MITCHENER Then arrest yourself, and off with you to the guard-room

THE ORDERLY What am I to arrest myself for?

MITCHENER Thats nothing to you You have your orders obey them Do you hear? Right about face March

THE ORDERLY How would you feel if you was told to right-about-face and march as if you were a door-mat?

MITCHENER I should feel as if my country had spoken through the voice of my officer I should feel proud and honored to be able to serve my country by obeying its commands No thought of self, no vulgar preoccupation with my own petty vanity, could touch my mind at such a moment To me my officer would not be a mere man he would be for the moment—whatever his personal frailties—the incarnation of our national destiny

THE ORDERLY What I'm saying to you is the voice of old England a jolly sight more than all this rot that you get out of books I'd rather be spoke to by a sergeant than by you He tells me to go to hell when I challenges him to argue it out like a man It ant polite, but it's English What you say ant anything at all You dont act on it yourself You dont believe in it Youd punch my

head if I tried it on you, and serve me right. And look here Heres another point for you to argue—

MITCHENER [*with a shriek of protest*] No—

Mrs Banger comes in followed by Lady Corinthia Fanshane Mrs Banger is a masculine woman of forty with a powerful voice and great physical strength Lady Corinthia, who is also over thirty, is beautiful and romantic

MRS BANGER [*throning the door open decisively and marching straight to Mitchener*] Pray how much longer is the Anti-Suffraget League to be kept waiting? [*She passes him contemptuously and sits down with impressive confidence in the chair next the fireplace Lady Corinthia takes the chair on the opposite side of the table with equal aplomb*]

MITCHENER I'm extremely sorry You really do not know what I have to put up with This imbecile, incompetent, unsoldierly disgrace to the uniform he should never have been allowed to put on ought to have shewn you in fifteen minutes ago

THE ORDERLY All I said was—

MITCHENER Not another word Attention Right about face March [*The Orderly sits down doggedly*] Get out of the room this instant, you fool, or I'll kick you out

THE ORDERLY [*civilly*] I dont mind that, sir It's human It's English Why couldnt you have said it before? [*He goes out*]

MITCHENER Take no notice, I beg these scenes are of daily occurrence now that we have compulsory service under the command of the halfpenny papers Pray sit down

LADY CORINTHIA [*rising*] {Thank you [*They and Mrs Banger sit down again*]

MITCHENER [*sitting down with a slight chuckle of satisfaction*] And now, ladies, to what am I indebted—

MRS BANGER Let me introduce us I am Rosa Carmina Banger Mrs Banger, organizing secretary of the Anti-Suffraget League This is Lady Corinthia Fanshawe, the president of the League, known in musical circles—I am not musical—as the Richmond Park nightingale A soprano I am myself said to be almost a baritone, but I do not profess to understand these distinctions

MITCHENER [*murmuring politely*] Most happy, I'm sure

MRS BANGER We have come to tell you plainly that the Anti-Suffragets are going to fight

MITCHENER [*gallantly*] Oh, pray leave that

to the men, Mrs Banger

LADY CORINTHIA. We can no longer trust the men.

MRS BANGER They have shewn neither the strength, the courage, nor the determination which are needed to combat women like the Suffragets

LADY CORINTHIA Nature is too strong for the combatants.

MRS BANGER Physical struggles between persons of opposite sexes are unseemly

LADY CORINTHIA Demoralizing

MRS BANGER Insincere

LADY CORINTHIA They are merely embraces in disguise

MRS BANGER No such suspicion can attach to combats in which the antagonists are of the same sex

LADY CORINTHIA The Anti-Suffragets have resolved to take the field

MRS BANGER They will enforce the order of General Sandstone for the removal of all women from the two-mile radius—that is, all women except themselves

MITCHENER I am sorry to have to inform you, madam, that the Government has given up that project, and that General Sandstone has resigned in consequence.

MRS BANGER That does not concern us in the least We approve of the project and will see that it is carried out We have spent a good deal of money arming ourselves, and we are not going to have that money thrown away through the pusillanimity of a Cabinet of males

MITCHENER Arming yourselves! But, my dear ladies, under the latest proclamation women are strictly forbidden to carry chains, padlocks, tracts on the franchise, or weapons of any description

LADY CORINTHIA [*producing an ivory-handled revolver and pointing it at his nose*] Very little know your countrywomen! General Mitchener

MITCHENER [*without flinching*] Madam it is my duty to take possession of that weapon in accordance with the proclamation. Be good enough to put it down

MRS BANGER [*producing an XVIII century horse pistol*] Is it your duty to take possession of this also?

MITCHENER. That, madam, is not a weapon it is a curiosity If you would be kind enough to place it in some museum instead of pointing it at my head, I should be obliged to you.

MRS BANGER This pistol, sir, was carried at Waterloo by my grandmother

MITCHENER. I presume you mean your grandfather

MRS BANGER. You presume unwarrantably

LADY CORINTHIA Mrs Banger's grandmother commanded a canteen at that celebrated battle

MRS BANGER Who my grandfather was is a point that has never been quite clearly settled. I put my trust, not in my ancestors, but in my good sword, which is at my lodgings

MITCHENER Your sword!

MRS BANGER The sword with which I slew five Egyptians with my own hand at Kassassin, where I served as a trooper

MITCHENER. Lord bless me! But was your sex never discovered?

MRS BANGER It was never even suspected. I had a comrade—a gentleman ranker—whom they called Fanny. They never called me Fanny

LADY CORINTHIA The Suffragets have turned the whole woman movement on to the wrong track. They ask for a vote

MRS BANGER What use is a vote? Men have the vote

LADY CORINTHIA And men are slaves

MRS BANGER What women need is the right to military service Give me a well-mounted regiment of women with sabres, opposed to a regiment of men with votes. We shall see which will go down before the other No we have had enough of these gentle pretty creatures who merely talk and cross-examine ministers in police courts, and go to prison like sheep, and suffer and sacrifice themselves. This question must be solved by blood and iron, as was well said by Bismarck, whom I have reason to believe was a woman in disguise

MITCHENER. Bismarck a woman!

MRS BANGER All the really strong men of history have been disguised women

MITCHENER [*remonstrating*] My dear lady!

MRS BANGER How can you tell? You never knew that the hero of the charge at Kassassin was a woman: yet she was it was I, Rosa Carmina Banger Would Napoleon have been so brutal to women, think you, had he been a man?

MITCHENER. Oh, come, come! Really! Surely female rulers have often shewn all the feminine weaknesses. Queen Elizabeth, for in

stance Her vanity, her levity—

MRS BANGER Nobody who has studied the history of Queen Elizabeth can doubt for a moment that she was a disguised man

LADY CORINTHIA [*admiring Mrs Banger*] Isnt she splendid!

MRS BANGER [*rising with a large gesture*] This very afternoon I shall cast off this hampering skirt for ever, mount my charger, and with my good sabre lead the Anti-Suffragets to victory [*She strides to the other side of the room, snorting*]

MITCHENER But I cant allow anything of the sort, madam. I shall stand no such ridiculous nonsense I'm perfectly determined to put my foot down—

LADY CORINTHIA Dont be hysterical, General.

MITCHENER Hysterical!

MRS BANGER Do you think we are to be stopped by these childish exhibitions of temper? They are useless, and your tears and entreaties—a man's last resource—will avail you just as little I sweep them away, just as I sweep your plans of campaign "made in Germany"—

MITCHENER [*flying into a transport of rage*] How dare you repeat that infamous slander! [*He rings the bell violently*] If this is the alternative to votes for women, I shall advocate giving every woman in the country six votes [*The Orderly comes in*] Remove that woman See that she leaves the building at once

The Orderly forlornly contemplates the iron front presented by Mrs Banger

THE ORDERLY [*propitiatorily*] Would you av the feeln art to step out, madam?

MRS BANGER. You are a soldier Obey your orders Put me out If I got such an order I should not hesitate

THE ORDERLY [*to Mitchener*] Would you mind lendin me a and, Guvner?

LADY CORINTHIA [*raising her revolver*] I shall be obliged to shoot you if you stir, General

MRS BANGER [*to the Orderly*] When you are ordered to put a person out you should do it like this [*She hurls him from the room He is heard falling headlong downstairs and crashing through a glass door*] I shall now wait on General Sandstone If he shews any sign of weakness, he shall share that poor wretch's fate [*She goes out*]

LADY CORINTHIA. Isnt she magnificent?

MITCHENER Thank heaven she's gone And now, my dear lady, is it necessary to keep

that loaded pistol to my nose all through our conversation?

LADY CORINTHIA It's not loaded It's heavy enough, goodness knows, without putting bullets in it

MITCHENER [*triumphantly snatching his revolver from the drawer*] Then I am master of the situation This is loaded Ha, ha!

LADY CORINTHIA. But since we are not really going to shoot one another, what difference can it possibly make?

MITCHENER [*putting his pistol down on the table*] True Quite true I recognize there the practical good sense that has prevented you from falling into the snares of the Suffragets

LADY CORINTHIA The Suffragets, General, are the dupes of dowdies A really attractive and clever woman—

MITCHENER [*gallantly*] Yourself, for instance

LADY CORINTHIA [*snatching up his revolver*] Another step and you are a dead man

MITCHENER [*amazed*] My dear lady!

LADY CORINTHIA I am not your dear lady You are not the first man who has concluded that because I am devoted to music and can reach F in alt with the greatest facility—Path never got above E flat—I am marked out as the prey of every libertine You think I am like the thousands of weak women whom you have ruined—

MITCHENER I solemnly protest—

LADY CORINTHIA Oh, I know what you officers are To you a woman's honor is nothing, and the idle pleasure of the moment is everything

MITCHENER This is perfectly ridiculous I never ruined anyone in my life

LADY CORINTHIA Never! Are you in earnest?

MITCHENER Certainly I am in earnest Most indignantly in earnest

LADY CORINTHIA [*throwing down the pistol contemptuously*] Then you have no temperament you are an artist You have no soul for music

MITCHENER Ive subscribed to the regimental band all my life I bought two sarrusophones for it out of my own pocket When I sang Tosti's Goodbye for Ever at Knightsbridge in 1880 the whole of the regiment wept You see now, I remember that

LADY CORINTHIA Your advances are useless. I—

MITCHENER Confound it, madam, can you not receive an innocent compliment without

suspecting me of dishonorable intentions?

LADY CORINTHIA Love—real love—makes all intentions honorable. But you could never understand that.

MITCHENER I'll not submit to the vulgar penny-novelette notion that an officer is less honorable than a civilian in his relations with women. While I live I'll raise my voice—

LADY CORINTHIA Tush!

MITCHENER What do you mean by tush?

LADY CORINTHIA You can't raise your voice above its natural compass. What sort of voice have you?

MITCHENER A tenor. What sort had you?

LADY CORINTHIA Had! I have it still. I tell you I am the highest living soprano. [*Scornfully*] What was your highest note, pray?

MITCHENER B flat—once—in 1879. I was drunk at the time.

LADY CORINTHIA [*gazing at him almost tenderly*] Though you may not believe me, I find you are more interesting when you talk about music than when you are endeavoring to betray a woman who has trusted you by remaining alone with you in your apartment.

MITCHENER [*springing up and fuming away to the fireplace*] Those repeated insults to a man of blameless life are as disgraceful to you as they are undeserved by me, Lady Corinthia. Such suspicions invite the conduct they impute. [*She raises the pistol*] You need not be alarmed. I am only going to leave the room.

LADY CORINTHIA. Fish.

MITCHENER Fish! This is worse than tush. Why fish?

LADY CORINTHIA. Yes, fish. cold-blooded fish.

MITCHENER Dash it all, madam, do you want me to make advances to you?

LADY CORINTHIA I have not the slightest intention of yielding to them; but to make them would be a tribute to romance. What is life without romance?

MITCHENER [*making a movement towards her*] I tell you—

LADY CORINTHIA Stop. No nearer. No vulgar sensuousness. If you must adore, adore at a distance.

MITCHENER This is worse than Mrs Banger. I shall ask that estimable woman to come back.

LADY CORINTHIA Poor Mrs Banger! Do not for a moment suppose, General Mitchener,

that Mrs Banger represents my views on the suffrage question. Mrs Banger is a man in petticoats. I am every inch a woman; but I find it convenient to work with her.

MITCHENER Do you find the combination comfortable?

LADY CORINTHIA I do not wear combinations, General. [*with dignity*] they are unwomanly.

MITCHENER [*throwing himself despairingly into the chair next the hearthrug*] I shall go mad. I never for a moment dreamt of alluding to anything of the sort.

LADY CORINTHIA There is no need to blush and become self-conscious at the mention of underclothing. You are extremely vulgar, General.

MITCHENER Lady Corinthia: you have my pistol. Will you have the goodness to blow my brains out? I should prefer it to any other effort to follow the gyrations of the weather-cock. You no doubt call your mind. If you refuse, then I warn you that you'll not get another word out of me—not if we sit here until doomsday.

LADY CORINTHIA I don't want you to talk. I want you to listen. You do not understand my views on the question of the suffrage. [*She rises to make a speech*] I must preface my remarks by reminding you that the Suffraget movement is essentially a dowdy movement. The Suffragets are not all dowdies; but they are mainly supported by dowdies. Now I am not a dowdy. Oh, no compliments—

MITCHENER I did not utter a sound.

LADY CORINTHIA [*smiling*] It is easy to read your thoughts. I am one of those women who are accustomed to rule the world through men. Man is ruled by beauty, by charm. The men who are not have no influence. The Salic Law, which forbade women to occupy a throne, is founded on the fact that when a woman is on the throne the country is ruled by men, and therefore ruled badly; whereas when a man is on the throne the country is ruled by women, and therefore ruled well. The Suffragets would degrade women from being rulers to being voters, mere politicians, the drudges of the caucus and the polling booth. We should lose our influence completely under such a state of affairs. The New Zealand women have the vote. What is the result? No poet ever makes a New Zealand woman his heroine. One might as well be romantic about New Zealand mutton. Look

at the Suffragets themselves The only ones who are popular are the pretty ones, who flirt with mobs as ordinary women flirt with officers

MITCHENER Then I understand you to hold that the country should be governed by the women after all.

LADY CORINTHIA Not by all the women By certain women I had almost said by one woman By the women who have charm—who have artistic talent—who wield a legitimate, a refining influence over the men [*She sits down gracefully, smiling, and arranging her draperies with conscious elegance*]

MITCHENER In short, madam, you think that if you give the vote to the man, you give the power to the woman who can get round the man

LADY CORINTHIA That is not a very delicate way of putting it, but I suppose that is how you would express what I mean

MITCHENER Perhaps you've never had any experience of garrison life If you had, you'd have noticed that the sort of woman who's clever at getting round men is sometimes rather a bad lot.

LADY CORINTHIA What do you mean by a bad lot?

MITCHENER I mean a woman who would play the very devil if the other women didn't keep her in pretty strict order I don't approve of democracy, because it's rot, and I'm against giving the vote to women, because I'm not accustomed to it, and therefore am able to see with an unprejudiced eye what infernal nonsense it is But I tell you plainly, Lady Corinthia, that there is one game that I dislike more than either democracy or votes for women, and that is the game of Antony and Cleopatra If I must be ruled by women, let me have decent women, and not—well, not the other sort

LADY CORINTHIA You have a coarse mind, General Mitchener

MITCHENER So has Mrs Banger And, by George! I prefer Mrs Banger to you!

LADY CORINTHIA [*bounding to her feet*] You prefer Mrs Banger to me!!

MITCHENER I do You said yourself she was splendid

LADY CORINTHIA You are no true man You are one of those unsexed creatures who have no joy in life, no sense of beauty, no high notes

MITCHENER No doubt I am, madam As a

matter of fact, I am not clever at discussing public questions, because, as an English gentleman, I was not brought up to use my brains But occasionally, after a number of remarks which are perhaps sometimes rather idiotic, I get certain convictions Thanks to you, I have now got a conviction that this woman question is not a question of lovely and accomplished females, but of dowdies The average Englishwoman is a dowdy and never has half a chance of becoming anything else She hasn't any charm, and she has no high notes, except when she's giving her husband a piece of her mind, or calling down the street for one of the children

LADY CORINTHIA How disgusting!

MITCHENER Somebody must do the dowdy work! If we had to choose between pitching all the dowdies into the Thames and pitching all the lovely and accomplished women, the lovely ones would have to go

LADY CORINTHIA And if you had to do without Wagner's music or do without your breakfast, you would do without Wagner Pray does that make eggs and bacon more precious than music, or the butcher and baker better than the poet and philosopher? The scullery may be more necessary to our bare existence than the cathedral. Even humbler apartments might make the same claim But which is the more essential to the higher life?

MITCHENER Your arguments are so devilishly ingenious that I feel convinced you got them out of some confounded book Mine—such as they are—are my own I imagine it's something like this There is an old saying that if you take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves Well, perhaps if we take care of the dowdies and the butchers and the bakers, the beauties and the bigwigs will take care of themselves [*Rising and facing her determinedly*] Anyhow, I don't want to have things arranged for me by Wagner I'm not Wagner How does he know where the shoe pinches me? How do you know where the shoe pinches your washerwoman? you and your high F in alt! How are you to know when you haven't made her comfortable unless she has a vote? Do you want her to come and break your windows?

LADY CORINTHIA Am I to understand that General Mitchener is a Democrat and a Suffraget?

MITCHENER Yes you have converted me—

you and Mrs Banger

LADY CORINTHIA Farewell, creature [*Balsquith enters hurriedly*] Mr Balsquith I am going to wait on General Sandstone He, at least, is an officer and a gentleman [*She sails out*]

BALSQUITH Mitchener the game is up

MITCHENER What do you mean?

BALSQUITH. The strain is too much for the Cabinet The old Liberal and Unionist Free Traders declare that if they are defeated on their resolution to invite tenders from private contractors for carrying on the Army and Navy, they will go solid for votes for women as the only means of restoring the liberties of the country which we have destroyed by compulsory military service

MITCHENER Infernal impudence!

BALSQUITH The Labor Party is taking the same line They say the men got the Factory Acts by hiding behind the women's petticoats, and that they will get votes for the army in the same way.

MITCHENER. Balsquith, we must not yield to clamor. I have just told that woman that I am at last convinced—

BALSQUITH [*joyfully*] —that the Suffragets must be supported?

MITCHENER No that the Anti-Suffragets must be put down at all hazards

BALSQUITH Same thing

MITCHENER No For you now tell me that the Labor Party demands votes for women That makes it impossible to give them, because it would be yielding to clamor The one condition on which we can consent to grant anything in this country is that nobody shall presume to ask for it

BALSQUITH [*earnestly*] Mitchener it's no use You cant have the conveniences of Democracy without its occasional inconveniences

MITCHENER What are its conveniences, I should like to know?

BALSQUITH Well, when you tell people that they are the real rulers and they can do what they like, nine times out of ten they say "All right, tell us what to do." But it happens sometimes that they get an idea of their own; and then of course you're landed

MITCHENER Sh—

BALSQUITH [*desperately shouting him down*] No it's no use telling me to shoot them down I'm not going to do it After all, I don't suppose votes for women will make much differ-

ence. It hasn't in the other countries in which it has been tried

MITCHENER I never supposed it would make any difference What I cant stand is giving in to that Pankhurst lot Hang it all, Balsquith, it seems only yesterday that we put them in quad for a month. I said at the time that it ought to have been ten years If my advice had been taken this wouldn't have happened It's a consolation to me that events are proving how thoroughly right I was

The Orderly rushes in

THE ORDERLY. Look 'ere, sir Mrs Banger's locked the door of General Sandstone's room on the inside, an' she's sittin on his ed til he signs a proclamation for women to serve in the army

MITCHENER. Put your shoulder to the door and burst it open

THE ORDERLY It's only in story books that doors burst open as easy as that Besides, I'm only too thankful to av a locked door between me and Mrs B, and so is all the rest of us

MITCHENER Cowards Balsquith to the rescue! [*He dashes out*]

BALSQUITH [*ambling calmly to the hearth*] This is the business of the Serjeant-at-Arms rather than of the leader of the House Theres no use in my tackling Mrs Banger she would only sit on my head too

THE ORDERLY. You take my tip, Mr Balsquith. Give the women the vote and give the army civil rights, and av done with it

Mitchener returns and comes between them

MITCHENER Balsquith prepare to hear the worst

BALSQUITH Sandstone is no more?

MITCHENER On the contrary, he is particularly lively. He has softened Mrs Banger by a proposal of marriage in which he appears to be perfectly in earnest He says he has met his ideal at last, a really soldierly woman. She will sit on his head for the rest of his life, and the British Army is now to all intents and purposes commanded by Mrs Banger When I remonstrated with Sandstone she positively shouted "Right about face March" at me in the most offensive tone. If she hadn't been a woman I should have punched her head I precious nearly punched Sandstone's The horrors of martial law administered by Mrs Banger are too terrible to be faced. I demand civil rights for the army.

THE ORDERLY [*chuckling*] Wot oh, General! Wot oh!

MITCHENER Hold your tongue [*He goes to the door and calls*] Mrs Farrell! [*He returns, and again addresses the Orderly*] Civil rights dont mean the right to be uncivil [*Pleased with his own wit*] Almost a pun Ha ha!

MRS FARRELL [*entering*] Whats the matter now? [*She comes to the table*]

MITCHENER [*to the Orderly*] I have private business with Mrs Farrell Outside, you infernal blackguard

THE ORDERLY [*arguing, as usual*] Well, I didnt ask to— [*Mitchener seizes him by the nape, marches him out, slams the door, and comes solemnly to Mrs Farrell*]

MITCHENER Excuse the abruptness of this communication, Mrs Farrell, but I know only one woman in the country whose practical ability and force of character can maintain her husband in competition with the husband of Mrs Banger I have the honor to propose for your hand

MRS FARRELL D'ye mean you want to marry me?

MITCHENER I do

MRS FARRELL No thank you I'd have to work for you just the same, only I shouldnt get any wages for it

BALSQUITH That will be remedied when women get the vote Ive had to promise that

MITCHENER [*winningly*] Mrs Farrell you have been charwoman here now ever since I took up my duties Have you really never, in your more romantic moments, cast a favorable eye on my person?

MRS FARRELL Ive been too busy casting an unfavorable eye on your cloze an on the lthther you make with your papers

MITCHENER [*wounded*] Am I to understand that you refuse me?

MRS FARRELL Just wait a bit [*She takes Mitchener's chair and rings up the telephone*] Double three oh seven Elephant

MITCHENER I trust youre not ringing for the police, Mrs Farrell I assure you I'm perfectly sane

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] Is that you, Eliza? [*She listens for the answer*] Not out o bed yet! Go and pull her out be the heels, the lazy sthreel, and tell her her mother wants to speak to her very particularly about General Mitchener [*To Mitchener*] Dont you be afeard I know youre sane enough when youre not talkin about the Germans [*Into*

the telephone] Is that you, Eliza? [*She listens for the answer*] D'ye remember me givin you a clout on the side of the head for tellin me that if I only knew how to play me cards I could marry any General on the staff instead o disgracin you be ein a charwoman? [*She listens for the answer*] Well, I can have General Mitchener without playin any cards at all What d'ye think I ought to say? [*She listens*] Well, I'm no chicken meself. [*To Mitchener*] How old are you?

MITCHENER [*with an effort*] Fifty-two

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] He says he's fifty-two [*She listens, then, to Mitchener*] She says youre down in Who's Who as sixty-one

MITCHENER Damn Who's Who!

MRS FARRELL [*into the telephone*] Anyhow I wouldnt let that stand in the way [*She listens*] If I really wha t? [*She listens*] I cant hear you If I really wha t? [*She listens*] Who druv him? I never said a word to— Eh? [*She listens*] Oh, love him Arra, dont be a fool, child [*To Mitchener*] She wants to know do I really love you [*Into the telephone*] It's likely indeed I'd frighten the man off with any such nonsense at my age What? [*She listens*] Well, thats just what I was thinkin

MITCHENER May I ask what you were thinking, Mrs Farrell? This suspense is awful

MRS FARRELL I was thinkin that praps the Duchess might like her daughther-in-law's mother to be a General's lady betther than to be a charwoman [*Into the telephone*] Waitle youre married yourself, me fine lady youll find out that every woman's a charwoman from the day she's married [*She listens*] Then you think I might take him? [*She listens*] G'lang, you young scald if I had you here I'd teach you manners [*She listens*] Thats enough now Back wid you to bed, and be thankful I'm not there to put me slipper across you. [*She rings off*] The impudence! [*To Mitchener*] Bless you, me childher, may you be happy, she says [*To Balsquith, going to his side of the room*] Give dear old Mitch me love, she says

The Orderly opens the door, ushering in Lady Cornthia

THE ORDERLY Lady Cornthia Fanshawe to speak to you, sir

LADY CORINTHIA General Mitchener your designs on Mrs Banger are defeated. She is engaged to General Sandstone Do you still prefer her to me?

MRS FARRELL. He's out o the hunt He's engaged to me

The Orderly, overcome by this news, reels from the door to the standing desk and clutches the stool to save himself from collapsing

MITCHENER And extremely proud of it, Lady Corinthia

LADY CORINTHIA [*contemptuously*] She suits you exactly [*Coming to Balsquith*] Mr Balsquith, you, at least, are not a Philistine.

BALSQUITH No, Lady Corinthia; but I'm a confirmed bachelor. I dont want a wife, but I want an Egeria

MRS FARRELL More shame for you!

LADY CORINTHIA Silence, woman The position and functions of a wife may suit your gross nature An Egeria is exactly what I desire to be [*To Balsquith*] Can you play accompaniments?

BALSQUITH Melodies only, I regret to say With one finger But my brother, who is a very obliging fellow, and not unlike me personally, is acquainted with three chords, with which he manages to accompany most of the comic songs of the day

LADY CORINTHIA. I do not sing comic songs Neither will you when I am your Egeria You must come to my musical at-home this afternoon I will allow you to sit at my feet

BALSQUITH [*doing so*] That is my ideal of romantic happiness It commits me exactly as far as I desire to venture Thank you.

THE ORDERLY Wot price me, General? Wont you celebrate your engagement by doin somethin for me? Maynt I be promoted to be a sergeant?

MITCHENER. Youre too utterly incompetent to discharge the duties of a sergeant You

are only fit to be a lieutenant. I shall recommend you for a commission

THE ORDERLY Hooray! The Parkinsons o Stepney'll be proud to have me call on em now I'll go and tell the sergeant what I think of him Hooray! [*He rushes out*]

MRS FARRELL [*going to the door and calling after him*] You might have the manners to shut the door afther you [*She shuts it and comes between Mitchener and Lady Corinthia*].

MITCHENER Poor wretch! the day after civil rights are conceded to the army he and Chubbs-Jenkinson will be found incapable of maintaining discipline. They will be sacked and replaced by really capable men Mrs Farrell as we are engaged, and I am anxious to do the correct thing in every way, I am quite willing to kiss you if you wish it

MRS FARRELL Youd only feel like a fool, and so would I

MITCHENER You are really the most sensible woman Ive made an extremely wise choice [*He kisses her hand*]

LADY CORINTHIA [*to Balsquith*] You may kiss my hand, if you wish

BALSQUITH [*cautiously*] I think we had better not commit ourselves too far Let us change a subject which threatens to become embarrassing [*To Mitchener*] The moral of the occasion for you, Mitchener, appears to be that youve got to give up treating soldiers as if they were schoolboys

MITCHENER. The moral for you, Balsquith, is that youve got to give up treating women as if they were angels Ha ha!

MRS FARRELL. It's a mercy youve found one another out at last Thats enough now

THE END

XXXVI

THE GLIMPSE OF REALITY

A TRAGEDIETTA

In the fifteenth century A.D Gloaming An inn on the edge of an Italian lake A stone cross with a pedestal of steps A very old friar sitting on the steps The angelus rings The friar prays and crosses himself A girl ferries a boat to the shore and comes up the bank to the cross

THE GIRL. Father were you sent here by a boy from—

THE FRIAR [*in a high, piping, but clear voice*]

I'm a very old man Oh, very old Old enough to be your great grandfather, my daughter. Oh, very very old

THE GIRL. But were you sent here by a boy from—

THE FRIAR Oh yes, yes, yes, yes Quite a boy, he was Very young And I'm very old Oh, very very old, dear daughter.

THE GIRL Are you a holy man?

THE FRIAR [*ecstatically*] Oh, very holy
Very, very, very, very holy

THE GIRL But have you your wits still
about you, father? Can you absolve me from
a great sin?

THE FRIAR Oh yes, yes, yes A very great
sin I'm very old, but I've my wits about me
I'm one hundred and thirteen years old, by
the grace of Our Lady, but I still remember
all my Latin, and I can bind and loose, and
I'm very very wise, for I'm old and have left
far behind me the world, the flesh, and the
devil. You see I am blind, daughter, but
when a boy told me that there was a duty
for me to do here, I came without a guide,
straight to this spot, led by St Barbara. She
led me to this stone, daughter It's a com-
fortable stone to me she has blessed it for me

THE GIRL It's a cross, father

THE FRIAR [*pipng rapturously*] Oh blessed,
blessed, ever blessed be my holy patroness
for leading me to this sacred spot Is there
any building near this, daughter? The boy
mentioned an inn

THE GIRL There is an inn, father, not
twenty yards away It's kept by my father,
Squarcio

THE FRIAR And is there a barn where a
very very old man may sleep and have a
handful of peas for his supper?

THE GIRL There is bed and board both for
holy men who will take the guilt of our sins
from us Swear to me on the cross that you
are a very holy man

THE FRIAR I'll do better than that,
daughter I'll prove my holiness to you by a
miracle

THE GIRL A miracle!

THE FRIAR A most miraculous miracle A
wonderful miracle! When I was only eighteen
years of age I was already famous for my
devoutness When the hand of the blessed
Saint Barbara, which was chopped off in the
days when the church was persecuted, was
found at Viterbo, I was selected by the Pope
himself to carry it to Rome for that blessed
lady's festival there, and since that my hand
has never grown old. It remains young and
warm and plump whilst the rest of my body
is withered almost to dust, and my voice is
cracked and become the whistling you now
hear

THE GIRL Is that true? Let me see [*He
takes her hand in his She kneels and kisses it
fervently*] Oh, it's true You are a saint

Heaven has sent you in answer to my prayer

THE FRIAR As soft as your neck, is it not?
[*He caresses her neck*]

THE GIRL It thrills me it is wonderful

THE FRIAR It thrills me also, daughter
That, too, is a miracle at my age

THE GIRL Father—

THE FRIAR Come closer, daughter I'm
very very old and very very very deaf you
must speak quite close to my ear if you speak
low [*She kneels with her breast against his arm
and her chin on his shoulder*] Good Good
That's better Oh, I'm very very old

THE GIRL Father I am about to commit a
deadly sin

THE FRIAR Do, my daughter Do, do, do,
do, do

THE GIRL [*discouraged*] Oh, you do not hear
what I say

THE FRIAR Not hear! Then come closer,
daughter Oh, much, much closer Put your
arm round my shoulders, and speak in my
ear Do not be ashamed, my daughter I'm
only a sack of old bones You can hear them
rattle [*He shakes his shoulders and makes the
beads of his rosary rattle at the same time*]
Listen to the old man's bones rattling Oh,
take the old old man to heaven, Blessed
Barbara.

THE GIRL Your wits are wandering Listen
to me Are you listening?

THE FRIAR Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes
Remember whether I hear or not, I can
absolve All the better for you perhaps if I
do not hear the worst He! He! He! Well
well When my wits wander, squeeze my
young hand, and the blessed Barbara will
restore my faculties [*She squeezes his hand
vigorously*] That's right Tha-a-a-ats right.
Now I remember what I am and who you
are Proceed, my child

THE GIRL Father, I am to be married this
year to a young fisherman

THE FRIAR The devil you are, my dear

THE GIRL [*squeezing his hand*] Oh listen,
listen, you are wandering again

THE FRIAR That's right hold my hand
tightly I understand, I understand This
young fisherman is neither very beautiful
nor very brave, but he is honest and devoted
to you, and there is something about him
different to all the other young men

THE GIRL You know him, then!

THE FRIAR No no no no no I'm too old to
remember people But Saint Barbara tells

me everything

THE GIRL Then you know why we cant marry yet

THE FRIAR He is too poor His mother will not let him unless his bride has a dowry—

THE GIRL [*interrupting him impetuously*] Yes, yes oh blessed be Saint Barbara for sending you to me! Thirty crowns—thirty crowns from a poor girl like me it is wicked—monstrous I must sin to earn it

THE FRIAR That will not be your sin, but his mother's

THE GIRL Oh, that is true I never thought of that But will she suffer for it?

THE FRIAR Thousands of years in purgatory for it, my daughter. The worse the sin, the longer she will suffer So let her have it as hot as possible [*The girl recoils*] Do not let go my hand I'm wandering [*She squeezes his hand*] That's right, darling Sin is a very wicked thing, my daughter Even a mother-in-law's sin is very expensive; for your husband would stint you to pay for masses for her soul.

THE GIRL That is true You are very wise, father.

THE FRIAR Let it be a venial sin an amiable sin. What sin were you thinking of, for instance?

THE GIRL There is a young Count Ferruccio [*the Friar starts at the name*], son of the tyrant of Parma—

THE FRIAR An excellent young man, daughter You could not sin with a more excellent young man. But thirty crowns is too much to ask from him He cant afford it He is a beggar, an outcast He made love to Madonna Bugita, the sister of Cardinal Poldi, a Cardinal eighteen years of age, a nephew of the Holy Father The Cardinal surprised Ferruccio with his sister; and Ferruccio's temper got the better of him. He threw that holy young Cardinal out of the window and broke his arm

THE GIRL You know everything

THE FRIAR. Saint Barbara, my daughter, Saint Barbara I know nothing But where have you seen Ferruccio? Saint Barbara says that he never saw you in his life, and has not thirty crowns in the world

THE GIRL Oh, why does not Saint Barbara tell you that I am an honest girl who would not sell herself for a thousand crowns

THE FRIAR. Do not give way to pride, daughter. Pride is one of the seven deadly

sins

THE GIRL I know that, father, and believe me, I'm humble and good I swear to you by Our Lady that it is not Ferruccio's love that I must take, but his life [*The Friar, startled, turns powerfully on her*] Do not be angry, dear father do not cast me off. What is a poor girl to do? We are very poor, my father and I And I am not to kill him I am only to decoy him here, for he is a devil for women; and once he is in the inn, my father will do the rest

THE FRIAR [*in a rich baritone voice*] Will he, by thunder and lightning and the flood and all the saints, will he? [*He flings off his gown and beard, revealing himself as a handsome youth, a nobleman by his dress, as he springs up and rushes to the door of the inn, which he batters with a stone*] Ho there, Squarcio, rascal, assassin, son of a pig come out that I may break every bone in your carcass

THE GIRL You are a young man!

THE FRIAR Another miracle of Saint Barbara [*Kicking the door*] Come out, whelp come out, rat Come out and be killed Come out and be beaten to a jelly Come out, dog, swine, animal, mangy hound, lousy— [*Squarcio comes out, sword in hand*] Do you know who I am, dog?

SQUARCIO [*impressed*] No, your Excellency

THE FRIAR I am Ferruccio, Count Ferruccio, the man you are to kill, the man your devil of a daughter is to decoy, the man who is now going to cut you into forty thousand pieces and throw you into the lake

SQUARCIO Keep your temper, Signor Count

FERRUCCIO. I'll not keep my temper I've an uncontrollable temper I get blinding splitting headaches if I do not relieve my temper by acts of violence. I'll relieve it now by pounding you to jelly, assassin that you are.

SQUARCIO [*shrugging his shoulders*] As you please, Signor Count I may as well earn my money now as another time. [*He handles his sword*]

FERRUCCIO Ass' do you suppose I have trusted myself in this territory without precautions? My father has made a wager with your feudal lord here about me.

SQUARCIO. What wager, may it please your Excellency?

FERRUCCIO What wager, blockhead! Why, that if I am assassinated, the murderer will not be brought to justice.

SQUARCIO So that if I kill you—

FERRUCCIO Your Baron will lose ten crowns unless you are broken on the wheel for it

SQUARCIO Only ten crowns, Excellency! Your father does not value your life very highly.

FERRUCCIO Dolt Can you not reason? If the sum were larger your Baron would win it by killing me himself and breaking somebody else on the wheel for it you, most likely Ten crowns is just enough to make him break you on the wheel if you kill me, but not enough to pay for all the masses that would have to be said for him if the guilt were his

SQUARCIO That is very clever, Excellency [*Sheathing his sword*] You shall not be slain I will take care of that If anything happens, it will be an accident.

FERRUCCIO Body of Bacchus! I forgot that trick I should have killed you when my blood was hot

SQUARCIO Will your Excellency please to step in? My best room and my best cooking are at your Excellency's disposal

FERRUCCIO To the devil with your mangy kennel! You want to tell every traveller that Count Ferruccio slept in your best bed and was eaten by your army of fleas Take yourself out of my sight when you have told me where the next inn is

SQUARCIO, I'm sorry to thwart your Excellency, but I have not forgotten your father's wager, and until you leave this territory I shall stick to you like your shadow

FERRUCCIO And why, pray?

SQUARCIO Someone else might kill your Excellency, and, as you say, my illustrious Baron might break me on the wheel for your father's ten crowns I must protect your Excellency, whether your Excellency is willing or not

FERRUCCIO If you dare to annoy me, I'll handle your bones so that there will be nothing left for the hangman to break. Now what do you say?

SQUARCIO I say that your Excellency overrates your Excellency's strength You would have no more chance against me than a grasshopper [*Ferruccio makes a demonstration*] Oh, I know that your Excellency has been taught by fencers and wrestlers and the like, but I can take all you can give me without turning a hair, and settle the account when you are out of breath That is why

common men are dangerous, your Excellency they are inured to toil and endurance Besides, I know all the tricks

THE GIRL Do not attempt to quarrel with my father, Count It must be as he says It is his profession to kill What could you do against him? If you want to beat somebody, you must beat me [*She goes into the inn*]

SQUARCIO I advise you not to try that, Excellency She also is very strong

FERRUCCIO Then I shall have a headache that's all [*He throws himself ill-humoredly on a bench at the table outside the inn Giulia returns with a tablecloth and begins preparing the table for a meal*]

SQUARCIO A good supper, Excellency, will prevent that And Giulia will sing for you

FERRUCCIO Not while there's a broomstick in the house to break her ugly head with. Do you suppose I'm going to listen to the howling of a she-wolf who wanted me to absolve her for getting me killed?

SQUARCIO The poor must live as well as the rich, sir Giulia is a good girl [*He goes into the inn*]

FERRUCCIO [*shouting after him*] Must the rich die that the poor may live?

GIULIA The poor often die that the rich may live

FERRUCCIO What an honor for them! But it would have been no honor for me to die merely that you might marry your clod of a fisherman

GIULIA You are spiteful, Signor

FERRUCCIO I am no troubadour, Giulaccia, if that is what you mean

GIULIA How did you know about my Sandro and his mother? How were you so wise when you pretended to be an old friar? you that are so childish now that you are yourself!

FERRUCCIO I take it that either Saint Barbara inspired me, or else that you are a great fool

GIULIA Saint Barbara will surely punish you for that wicked lie you told about her hand.

FERRUCCIO The hand that thrilled you?

GIULIA That was blasphemy You should not have done it You made me feel as if I had had a taste of heaven, and then you poisoned it in my heart as a taste of hell That was wicked and cruel You nobles are cruel

FERRUCCIO Well! do you expect us to nurse your babies for you? Our work is to rule and

to fight Ruling is nothing but inflicting cruelties on wrongdoers. fighting is nothing but being cruel to one's enemies. You poor people leave us all the cruel work, and then wonder that we are cruel Where would you be if we left it undone? Outside the life I lead all to myself—the life of thought and poetry—I know only two pleasures cruelty and lust I desire revenge I desire women And both of them disappoint me when I get them

GIULIA It would have been a good deed to kill you, I think

FERRUCCIO Killing is always sport, my Giulietta

SANDRO'S VOICE [*on the lake*] Giulietta! Giulietta!

FERRUCCIO [*calling to him*] Stop that noise Your Giulietta is here with a young nobleman Come up and amuse him [*To Giulietta*] What will you give me if I tempt him to defy his mother and marry you without a dowry?

GIULIA You are tempting me A poor girl can give no more than she has. I should think you were a devil if you were not a noble, which is worse [*She goes out to meet Sandro*]

FERRUCCIO [*calling after her*] The devil does evil for pure love of it he does not ask a price he offers it [*Squarcio returns*] Prepare supper for four, bandit

SQUARCIO Is your appetite so great in this heat, Signor?

FERRUCCIO There will be four to supper. You, I, your daughter, and Sandro. Do not stint yourselves. I pay for all Go and prepare more food

SQUARCIO Your order is already obeyed, Excellency

FERRUCCIO. How?

SQUARCIO I prepared for four, having you here to pay The only difference your graciousness makes is that we shall have the honor to eat with you instead of after you

FERRUCCIO Dog of a bandit! you should have been born a nobleman.

SQUARCIO I was born noble, Signor; but as we had no money to maintain our pretensions, I dropped them [*He goes back into the inn*]

Giulia returns with Sandro.

GIULIA This is the lad, Excellency Sandro. This is his lordship Count Ferruccio.

SANDRO At your lordship's service

FERRUCCIO Sit down, Sandro, You, Giulia, and Squarcio are my guests. [*They sit*]

GIULIA. I've told Sandro everything, Ex-

cellency.

FERRUCCIO. And what does Sandro say? [*Squarcio returns with a tray*]

GIULIA He says that if you have ten crowns in your purse, and we kill you, we can give them to the Baron It would be the same to him as if he got it from your illustrious father.

SQUARCIO Stupid: the Count is cleverer than you think No matter how much money you give the Baron he can always get ten crowns more by breaking me on the wheel if the Count is killed

GIULIA. That is true. Sandro did not think of that

SANDRO [*with cheerful politeness*] Oh! what a head I have! I am not clever, Excellency At the same time you must know that I did not mean my Giulietta to tell you I know my duty to your Excellency better than that.

FERRUCCIO Come! You are dear people: charming people Let us get to work at the supper You shall be the mother of the family and give us our portions, Giulietta [*They take their places*] That's right Serve me last, Giulietta Sandro is hungry

SQUARCIO [*to the girl*] Come come! do you not see that his Excellency will touch nothing until we have had some first [*He eats*] See, Excellency! I have tasted everything. To tell you the truth, poisoning is an art I do not understand

FERRUCCIO Very few professional poisoners do, Squarcio One of the best professionals in Rome poisoned my uncle and aunt They are alive still The poison cured my uncle's gout, and only made my aunt thin, which was exactly what she desired, poor lady, as she was losing her figure terribly

SQUARCIO There is nothing like the sword, Excellency

SANDRO Except the water, Father Squarcio. Trust a fisherman to know that Nobody can tell that drowning was not an accident.

FERRUCCIO What does Giulietta say?

GIULIA I should not kill a man if I hated him You cannot torment a man when he is dead. Men kill because they think it is what they call a satisfaction But that is only fancy.

FERRUCCIO And if you loved him? Would you kill him then?

GIULIA Perhaps If you love a man you are his slave everything he says—everything he does—is a stab to your heart: every day is a long dread of losing him Better kill him if there be no other escape

FERRUCCIO How well you have brought up your family, Squarcio! Some more omelette, Sandro?

SANDRO [*very cheerfully*] I thank your Excellency [*He accepts and eats with an appetite*]

FERRUCCIO I pledge you all To the sword and the fisherman's net to love and hate! [*He drinks they drink with him*]

SQUARCIO To the sword!

SANDRO To the net, Excellency, with thanks for the honor

GIULIA. To love, Signor

FERRUCCIO To hate the noble's portion!

SQUARCIO The meal has done you good, Excellency How do you feel now?

FERRUCCIO I feel that there is nothing but a bait of ten crowns between me and death, Squarcio

SQUARCIO It is enough, Excellency And enough is always enough

SANDRO Do not think of that, Excellency It is only that we are poor folk, and have to consider how to make both ends meet as one may say [*Looking at the dish*] Excellency—?

FERRUCCIO Finish it, Sandro I've done

SANDRO Father Squarcio?

SQUARCIO Finish it, finish it

SANDRO Giulietta?

GIULIA [*surprised*] Me? Oh no Finish it, Sandro it will only go to the pig

SANDRO Then, with your Excellency's permission—[*he helps himself*]

SQUARCIO Sing for his Excellency, my daughter

Giulia turns to the door to fetch her mandoline

FERRUCCIO I shall jump into the lake, Squarcio, if your cat begins to miaowl

SANDRO [*always cheerful and reassuring*] No, no, Excellency Giulietta sings very sweetly have no fear

FERRUCCIO I do not care for singing at least not the singing of peasants There is only one thing for which one woman will do as well as another, and that is lovemaking Come, Father Squarcio I will buy Giulietta from you you can have her back for nothing when I am tired of her How much?

SQUARCIO In ready money, or in promises?

FERRUCCIO Old fox Ready money

SQUARCIO Fifty crowns, Excellency

FERRUCCIO Fifty crowns! Fifty crowns for that blackfaced devil! I would not give fifty crowns for one of my mother's ladies-in-waiting Fifty pence, you must mean

SQUARCIO Doubtless your Excellency, being

a younger son, is poor Shall we say five and twenty crowns?

FERRUCCIO I tell you she is not worth five
SQUARCIO Oh, if you come to what she is worth, Excellency, what are any of us worth? I take it that you are a gentleman, not a merchant

GIULIA What are you worth, Signorino?

FERRUCCIO I am accustomed to be asked for favors, Giulietta, not to be asked impertinent questions

GIULIA What would you do if a strong man took you by the scruff of your neck, or his daughter thrust a knife in your throat, Signor?

FERRUCCIO It would be many a year, my gentle Giulietta, before any baseborn man or woman would dare threaten a nobleman again The whole village would be flayed alive

SANDRO Oh no, Signor These things often have a great air of being accidents And the great families are well content that they should appear so It is such a great trouble to flay a whole village alive Here by the water, accidents are so common

SQUARCIO We of the nobility, Signor, are not strict enough I learnt that when I took to breeding horses The horses you breed from thoroughbreds are not all worth the trouble most of them are screws Well, the horsebreeder gets rid of his screws for what they will fetch they go to labor like any peasant's beast. But our nobility does not study its business so carefully If you are a screw, and the son of a baron, you are brought up to think yourself a little god, though you are nothing, and cannot rule yourself, much less a province And you presume, and presume, and presume—

GIULIA And insult, and insult, and insult

SQUARCIO Until one day you find yourself in a strange place with nothing to help you but your own hands and your own wits—

GIULIA And you perish—

SANDRO Accidentally—

GIULIA And your soul goes crying to your father for vengeance—

SQUARCIO If indeed, my daughter, there be any soul left when the body is slain

FERRUCCIO [*crossing himself hastily*] Dog of a bandit do you dare doubt the existence of God and the soul?

SQUARCIO I think, Excellency, that the soul is so precious a gift that God will not

give it to a man for nothing. He must earn it by being something and doing something. I should not like to kill a man with a good soul. I've had a dog that had, I'm persuaded, made itself something of a soul; and if anyone had murdered that dog, I would have slain him. But shew me a man with no soul, one who has never done anything or been anything, and I will kill him for ten crowns with as little remorse as I would stick a pig.

SANDRO. Unless he be a nobleman, of course—

SQUARCIO. In which case the price is fifty crowns.

FERRUCCIO. Soul or no soul?

SQUARCIO. When it comes to a matter of fifty crowns, Excellency, business is business. The man who pays me must square the account with the devil. It is for my employer to consider whether the action be a good one or no; it is for me to earn his money honestly. When I said I should not like to kill a man with a good soul, I meant killing on my own account, not professionally.

FERRUCCIO. Are you such a fool then as to spoil your own trade by sometimes killing people for nothing?

SQUARCIO. One kills a snake for nothing, Excellency. One kills a dog for nothing sometimes.

SANDRO [*apologetically*]. Only a mad dog, Excellency, of course.

SQUARCIO. A pet dog, too. One that eats and eats and is useless, and makes an honest man's house dirty [*He rises*]. Come, Sandro, and help me to clean up. You, Giulia, stay and entertain his Excellency.

He and Sandro make a hammock of the cloth, in which they carry the wooden platters and fragments of the meal indoors. Ferruccio is left alone with Giulia. The gloaming deepens.

FERRUCCIO. Does your father do the house work with a great girl like you idling about? Squarcio is a fool, after all.

GIULIA. No, Signor, he has left me here to prevent you from escaping.

FERRUCCIO. There is nothing to be gained by killing me, Giuhaccia.

GIULIA. Perhaps, but I do not know. I saw Sandro make a sign to my father that is why they went in. Sandro has something in his head.

FERRUCCIO [*brutally*]. Liece, no doubt.

GIULIA [*unmoved*]. That would only make him scratch his head, Signor, not make signs

with it to my father. You did wrong to throw the Cardinal out of the window.

FERRUCCIO. Indeed and pray why?

GIULIA. He will pay thirty crowns for your dead body. Then Sandro could marry me.

FERRUCCIO. And be broken on the wheel for it.

GIULIA. It would look like an accident, Signor. Sandro is very clever, and he is so humble and cheerful and good-tempered that people do not suspect him as they suspect my father.

FERRUCCIO. Giuhetta, if I reach Sacromonte in safety, I swear to send you thirty crowns by a sure messenger within ten days. Then you can marry your Sandro. How does that appeal to you?

GIULIA. Your oath is not worth twenty pence, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Do you think I will die here like a rat in a trap— [*his breath fails him*].

GIULIA. Rats have to wait in their traps for death, Signor. Why not you?

FERRUCCIO. I'll fight.

GIULIA. You are welcome, Signor. The blood flows freest when it is hot.

FERRUCCIO. She devil! Listen to me, Giuhetta—

GIULIA. It is useless, Signor. Giuhetta or Giuhaccia, it makes no difference. If they two in there kill you, it will be no more to me—except for the money—than if my father trod on a snail.

FERRUCCIO. Oh, it is not possible that I, a nobleman, should die by such filthy hands.

GIULIA. You have lived by them, Signor. I see no sign of any work on your own hands. We can bring death as well as life, we poor people, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Mother of God, what shall I do?

GIULIA. Pray, Signor.

FERRUCCIO. Pray! With the taste of death in my mouth? I can think of nothing.

GIULIA. It is only that you have forgotten your beads, Signor [*she picks up the Friar's rosary*]. You remember the old man's bones rattling. Here they are [*she rattles them before him*].

FERRUCCIO. That reminds me. I know of a painter in the north that can paint such beautiful saints that the heart goes out of one's body to look at them. If I get out of this alive I'll make him paint St Barbara so that everyone can see that she is lovelier than St Cecilia, who looks like my washer-

woman's mother in her Chapel in our cathedral Can you give St Cecilia a picture if she lets me be killed?

GIULIA. No, but I can give her many prayers

FERRUCCIO Prayers cost nothing She will prefer the picture unless she is a greater fool than I take her to be

GIULIA She will thank the painter for it, not you, Signor And I'll tell her in my prayers to appear to the painter in a vision, and order him to paint her just as he sees her if she really wishes to be painted

FERRUCCIO You are devilishly ready with your answers Tell me, Giulietta is what your father told me true? Is your blood really noble?

GIULIA It is red, Signor, like the blood of the Christ in the picture in Church I do not know if yours is different. I shall see when my father kills you

FERRUCCIO Do you know what I am thinking, Giulietta?

GIULIA. No, Signor

FERRUCCIO I am thinking that if the good God would oblige me by taking my fool of an elder brother up to heaven, and his silly doll of a wife with him before she has time to give him a son, you would make a rare duchess for me Come! Will you help me to outwit your father and Sandro if I marry you afterwards?

GIULIA No, Signor I'll help them to kill you

FERRUCCIO My back is to the wall, then?

GIULIA To the precipice, I think, Signor

FERRUCCIO No matter, so my face is to the danger Did you notice, Giulia, a minute ago? I was frightened

GIULIA Yes, Signor I saw it in your face

FERRUCCIO The terror of terrors

GIULIA. The terror of death

FERRUCCIO No death is nothing I can face a stab just as I faced having my tooth pulled out at Faenza

GIULIA [*shuddering with sincere sympathy*] Poor Signorino! That must have hurt horribly

FERRUCCIO What! You pity me for the tooth affair, and you did not pity me in that hideous agony of terror that is not the terror of death nor of anything else, but pure grim terror in itself

GIULIA It was the terror of the soul, Signor And I do not pity your soul you have a wicked soul. But you have pretty teeth.

FERRUCCIO The toothache lasted a week, but the agony of my soul was too dreadful to last five minutes I should have died of it if it could have kept its grip of me But you helped me out of it

GIULIA I, Signor!

FERRUCCIO Yes you If you had pitied me if you had been less inexorable than death itself, I should have broken down and cried and begged for mercy But now I have come up against something hard something real something that does not care for me I see now the truth of my excellent uncle's opinion that I was a spoilt cub When I wanted anything I threatened men or ran crying to women, and they gave it to me I dreamed and romanced imagining things as I wanted them, not as they really are There is nothing like a good look into the face of death close up right on you for shewing you how little you really believe and how little you really are A priest said to me once, "In your last hour everything will fall away from you except your religion" But I have lived through my last hour, and my religion was the first thing that fell away from me When I was forced at last to believe in grim death I knew at last what belief was, and that I had never believed in anything before I had only flattered myself with pretty stories, and sheltered myself behind Mumbo Jumbo, as a soldier will shelter himself from arrows behind a clump of thistles that only hide the shooters from him When I believe in everything that is real as I believed for that moment in death, then I shall be a man at last I have tasted the water of life from the cup of death, and it may be now that my real life began with this [*he holds up the rosary*] and will end with the triple crown or the heretic's fire I care not which [*Springing to his feet*] Come out, then, dog of a bandit, and fight a man who has found his soul [*Squarcio appears at the door, sword in hand*] Ferruccio leaps at him and strikes him full in the chest with his dagger Squarcio puts back his left foot to brace himself against the shock The dagger snaps as if it had struck a stone wall]

GIULIA Quick, Sandro

Sandro, who has come stealing round the corner of the inn with a fishing net, casts it over Ferruccio, and drags it tight

SQUARCIO Your Excellency will excuse my shirt of mail A good home blow, nevertheless, Excellency

SANDRO Your Excellency will excuse my net it is a little damp

FERRUCCIO Well, what now? Accidental drowning, I suppose

SANDRO. Eh, Excellency, it is such a pity to throw a good fish back into the water when once you have got him safe in your net My Giulietta hold the net for me.

GIULIA [*taking the net and twisting it in her hands to draw it tighter round him*] I have you very fast now, Signorino, like a little bird in a cage

FERRUCCIO. You have my body, Giulia My soul is free

GIULIA. Is it, Signor? I think Saint Barbara has got that in her net too She has turned your jest into earnest.

SANDRO. It is indeed true, sir, that those who come under the special protection of God and the Saints are always a little mad, and thus makes us think it very unlucky to kill a madman And since from what Father Squarcio and I overheard, it is clear that your Excellency, though a very wise and reasonable young gentleman in a general way, is somewhat cracked on the subject of the soul and so forth, we have resolved to see that no harm comes to your Excellency

FERRUCCIO As you please. My life is only a drop falling from the vanishing clouds to the everlasting sea, from finite to infinite, and itself part of the infinite

SANDRO [*impressed*] Your Excellency speaks like a crazy but very holy book Heaven forbid that we should raise a hand against you! But your Excellency will notice that this good action will cost us thirty crowns.

FERRUCCIO Is it not worth it?

SANDRO Doubtless, doubtless. It will in fact save us the price of certain masses which we should otherwise have had said for the souls of certain persons who—ahem! Well, no matter But we think it dangerous and unbecoming that a nobleman like your Excellency should travel without a retinue, and unarmed; for your dagger is unfortunately broken, Excellency. If you would therefore have the condescension to accept Father Squarcio as your man-at-arms—your servant in all but the name, to save his nobility—he will go with you to any town in which you will feel safe from His Eminence the Cardinal, and will leave it to your Excellency's graciousness as to whether his magnanimous conduct will not then deserve some trifling present: say a wedding gift for my Giulietta

FERRUCCIO Good: the man I tried to slay will save me from being slain Who would have thought Saint Barbara so full of irony!

SANDRO And if the offer your Excellency was good enough to make in respect of Giulietta still stands—

FERRUCCIO. Rascal have you then no soul?

SANDRO I am a poor man, Excellency. I cannot afford these luxuries of the rich.

FERRUCCIO. There is a certain painter will presently make a great picture of St Barbara; and Giulia will be his model He will pay her well Giulia release the bird It is time for it to fly

She takes the net from his shoulders.

COOLE PARK, Summer, 1909

THE END

XXXVII

PASSION, POISON, AND PETRIFACTION; OR, THE FATAL GAZOGENE

A BRIEF TRAGEDY FOR BARNS AND BOOTHS

In a bed-sitting room in a fashionable quarter of London a lady sits at her dressing-table, with her maid combing her hair It is late, and the electric lamps are glowing Apparently the room is bedless; but there stands against the opposite wall to that at which the dressing-table is placed a piece of furniture that suggests a bookcase without carrying conviction. On the same side is

a chest of drawers of that disastrous kind which, recalcitrant to the opener until she is provoked to violence, then suddenly come wholly out and defy all her efforts to fit them in again Opposite this chest of drawers, on the lady's side of the room, is a cupboard The presence of a row of gentleman's boots beside the chest of drawers proclaims that the lady is married Her own boots are

beside the cupboard The third wall is pierced midway by the door, above which is a cuckoo clock Near the door a pedestal bears a portrait bust of the lady in plaster There is a fan on the dressing-table, a hatbox and rug strap on the chest of drawers, an umbrella and a bootjack against the wall near the bed The general impression is one of brightness, beauty, and social ambition, damped by somewhat inadequate means A certain air of theatricality is produced by the fact that though the room is rectangular it has only three walls Not a sound is heard except the overture and the crackling of the lady's hair as the maid's brush draws electric sparks from it in the dry air of the London midsummer

The cuckoo clock strikes sixteen

THE LADY How much did the clock strike, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS Sixteen, my lady

THE LADY That means eleven o'clock, does it not?

PHYLLIS Eleven at night, my lady In the morning it means half-past two, so if you hear it strike sixteen during your slumbers, do not rise

THE LADY I will not, Phyllis Phyllis I am weary I will go to bed Prepare my couch

Phyllis crosses the room to the bookcase and touches a button The front of the bookcase falls out with a crash and becomes a bed A roll of distant thunder echoes the crash

PHYLLIS [*shuddering*] It is a terrible night Heaven help all poor mariners at sea! My master is late I trust nothing has happened to him Your bed is ready, my lady

THE LADY Thank you, Phyllis [*She rises and approaches the bed*] Goodnight

PHYLLIS Will your ladyship not undress?

THE LADY Not tonight, Phyllis [*Glancing through where the fourth wall is missing*] Not under the circumstances

PHYLLIS [*impulsively throwing herself on her knees by her mistress's side, and clasping her round the waist*] Oh, my beloved mistress, I know not why or how, but I feel that I shall never see you alive again There is murder in the air [*Thunder*] Hark!

THE LADY Strange! As I sat there mewithought I heard angels singing, Oh, wont you come home, Bill Bailey? Why should angels call me Bill Bailey? My name is Magnesia Fitztollemache

PHYLLIS [*emphasizing the title*] Lady Magnesia Fitztollemache

LADY MAGNESIA In case we should never

again meet in this world, let us take a last farewell

PHYLLIS [*embracing her with tears*] My poor murdered angel mistress!

LADY MAGNESIA In case we should meet again, call me at half-past eleven

PHYLLIS I will, I will

Phyllis withdraws, overcome by emotion Lady Magnesia snatches off the electric light, and immediately hears the angels quite distinctly They sing Bill Bailey so sweetly that she can attend to nothing else, and forgets to remove even her boots as she draws the coverlet over herself and sinks to sleep, lulled by celestial harmony A white radiance plays on her pillow, and lights up her beautiful face But the thunder growls again, and a lurid red glow concentrates itself on the door, which is presently flung open, revealing a saturnine figure in evening dress, partially concealed by a crimson cloak As he steals towards the bed the unnatural glare in his eyes and the broad-bladed dagger nervously gripped in his right hand bode ill for the sleeping lady Providentially she sneezes on the very brink of eternity, and the tension of the murderer's nerves is such that he bolts precipitately under the bed at the sudden and startling Atscha! A dull, heavy, rhythmic thumping—the beating of his heart—betrays his whereabouts Soon he emerges cautiously and raises his head above the bed coverlet level

THE MURDERER I can no longer cower here listening to the agonized thumpings of my own heart She but snoze in her sleep I'll do't [*He again raises the dagger The angels sing again He cowers*] What is this? Has that tune reached Heaven?

LADY MAGNESIA [*waking and sitting up*] My husband! [*All the colors of the rainbow chase one another up his face with ghastly brilliancy*] Why do you change color? And what on earth are you doing with that dagger?

FITZ [*affecting unconcern, but unlunged*] It is a present for you a present from mother Pretty, isn't it? [*he displays it fatuously*]

LADY MAGNESIA But she promised me a fish slice

FITZ This is a combination fish slice and dagger One day you have salmon for dinner The next you have a murder to commit See?

LADY MAGNESIA My sweet mother-in-law! [*Someone knocks at the door*] That is Adolphus's knock. [*Fitz's face turns a dazzling green*] What has happened to your complexion? You

have turned green Now I think of it, you always do when Adolphus is mentioned Arnt you going to let him in?

FITZ Certainly not [*He goes to the door*]. Adolphus you cannot enter My wife is undressed and in bed

LADY MAGNESIA [*rising*] I am not Come in, Adolphus [*she switches on the electric light*].

ADOLPHUS [*without*] Something most important has happened I must come in for a moment

FITZ [*calling to Adolphus*] Something important happened? What is it?

ADOLPHUS [*without*] My new clothes have come home

FITZ He says his new clothes have come home

LADY MAGNESIA [*running to the door and opening it*] Oh, come in, come in Let me see

Adolphus Bastable enters He is in evening dress, made in the latest fashion, with the right half of the coat and the left half of the trousers yellow and the other halves black His silver-spangled waistcoat has a crimson handkerchief stuck between it and his shirt front.

ADOLPHUS. What do you think of it?

LADY MAGNESIA It is a dream! a creation! [*she turns him about to admire him*]

ADOLPHUS [*proudly*] I shall never be mistaken for a waiter again

FITZ A drink, Adolphus?

ADOLPHUS Thanks

Fitztollemache goes to the cupboard and takes out a tray with tumblers and a bottle of whisky. He puts them on the dressing-table.

FITZ Is the gazogene full?

LADY MAGNESIA Yes you put in the powders yourself today

FITZ [*sardonically*] So I did The special powders! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! [*his face is again strangely variegated*]

LADY MAGNESIA Your complexion is really going to pieces Why do you laugh in that silly way at nothing?

FITZ Nothing! Ha, ha! Nothing! Ha, ha, ha!

ADOLPHUS I hope, Mr Fitztollemache, you are not laughing at my clothes I warn you that I am an Englishman. You may laugh at my manners, at my brains, at my national institutions; but if you laugh at my clothes, one of us must die

Thunder.

FITZ I laughed but at the irony of Fate [*he takes a gazogene from the cupboard*]

ADOLPHUS [*satisfied*] Oh, that! Oh, yes, of

course!

FITZ Let us drown all unkindness in a loving cup [*He puts the gazogene on the floor in the middle of the room*] Pardon the absence of a table. we found it in the way and pawned it [*He takes the whisky bottle from the dressing-table*]

LADY MAGNESIA We picnic at home now It is delightful

She takes three tumblers from the dressing-table and sits on the floor, presiding over the gazogene, with Fitz and Adolphus squatting on her left and right respectively. Fitz pours whisky into the tumblers

FITZ [*as Magnesia is about to squirt soda into his tumbler*] Stay! No soda for me Let Adolphus have it all—all. I will take mine neat

LADY MAGNESIA [*proffering tumbler to Adolphus*] Pledge me, Adolphus

FITZ Kiss the cup, Magnesia Pledge her, man Drink deep

ADOLPHUS To Magnesia!

FITZ To Magnesia! [*The two men drink*] It is done [*Scrambling to his feet*] Adolphus: you have but ten minutes to live—if so long

ADOLPHUS What mean you?

MAGNESIA [*rising*] My mind misgives me I have a strange feeling here [*touching her heart*]

ADOLPHUS So have I, but lower down [*touching his stomach*] That gazogene is disagreeing with me

FITZ It was poisoned!

Sensation

ADOLPHUS [*rising*] Help! Police!

FITZ Dastard! you would appeal to the law? Can you not die like a gentleman?

ADOLPHUS But so young! when I have only worn my new clothes once

MAGNESIA. It is too horrible [*To Fitz*] Fiend! what drove you to this wicked deed?

FITZ Jealousy You admired his clothes you did not admire mine

ADOLPHUS My clothes [*his face lights up with heavenly radiance*]! Have I indeed been found worthy to be the first clothes-martyr? Welcome, death! Hark! angels call me. [*The celestial choir again raises its favorite chant He listens with a rapt expression Suddenly the angels sing out of tune; and the radiance on the poisoned man's face turns a sickly green*] Yah—ah! Oh—ahoo! The gazogene is disagreeing extremely. Oh! [*he throws himself on the bed, writhing*]

MAGNESIA [*to Fitz*] Monster. what have you done? [*She points to the distorted figure on the*

bed] That was once a Man, beautiful and glorious What have you made of it? A writhing, agonized, miserable, moribund worm

ADOLPHUS [*in a tone of the strongest remonstrance*] Oh, I say! Oh, come! No look here, Magnesia! Really!

MAGNESIA Oh, is this a time for petty vanity? Think of your misspent life—

ADOLPHUS [*much injured*] Whose misspent life?

MAGNESIA [*continuing relentlessly*] Look into your conscience look into your stomach [*Adolphus collapses in hideous spasms She turns to Fitz*] And this is your handiwork!

FITZ Mine is a passionate nature, Magnesia. I must have your undivided love I must have your love do you hear? LOVE! LOVE!! LOVE!!! LOVE!!!! LOVE!!!!

He raves, accompanied by a fresh paroxysm from the victim on the bed

MAGNESIA [*with sudden resolution*] You shall have it

FITZ [*enraptured*] Magnesia! I have recovered your love! Oh, how slight appears the sacrifice of this man compared to so glorious a reward! I would poison ten men without a thought of self to gain one smile from you

ADOLPHUS [*in a broken voice*] Farewell, Magnesia my last hour is at hand Farewell, farewell, farewell!

MAGNESIA At this supreme moment, George Fitztollemache, I solemnly dedicate to you all that I formerly dedicated to poor Adolphus

ADOLPHUS Oh, please not poor Adolphus yet. I still live, you know

MAGNESIA. The vital spark but flashes before it vanishes [*Adolphus groans*] And now, Adolphus, take this last comfort from the unhappy Magnesia Fitztollemache As I have dedicated to George all that I gave to you, so I will bury in your grave—or in your urn if you are cremated—all that I gave to him

FITZ I hardly follow this

MAGNESIA I will explain George hitherto I have given Adolphus all the romance of my nature—all my love—all my dreams—all my caresses Henceforth they are yours!

FITZ Angell

MAGNESIA Adolphus forgive me if this pains you

ADOLPHUS Dont mention it I hardly feel it The gazogene is so much worse [*Taken*

bad again] Oh!

MAGNESIA Peace, poor sufferer there is still some balm You are about to hear what I am going to dedicate to you

ADOLPHUS All I ask is a peppermint lozenge, for mercy's sake

MAGNESIA I have something far better than any lozenge the devotion of a lifetime Formerly it was George's I kept his house, or rather, his lodgings I mended his clothes I darned his socks I bought his food. I interviewed his creditors I stood between him and the servants I administered his domestic finances When his hair needed cutting or his countenance was imperfectly washed, I pointed it out to him The trouble that all this gave me made him prosaic in my eyes Familiarity bred contempt Now all that shall end My husband shall be my hero, my lover, my perfect knight He shall shield me from all care and trouble He shall ask nothing in return but love—boundless, priceless, rapturous, soul-enthraling love, LOVE! LOVE!! LOVE!!! [*she raves and flings her arms about Fitz*] And the duties I formerly discharged shall be replaced by the one supreme duty of duties the duty of weeping at Adolphus's tomb

FITZ [*reflectively*] My ownest, this sacrifice makes me feel that I have perhaps been a little selfish I cannot help feeling that there is much to be said for the old arrangement Why should Adolphus die for my sake?

ADOLPHUS I am not dying for your sake, Fitz I am dying because you poisoned me

MAGNESIA You do not fear to die, Adolphus, do you?

ADOLPHUS N-n-no, I dont exactly fear to die Still—

FITZ Still, if an antidote—

ADOLPHUS [*bounding from the bed*] Antidote!

MAGNESIA [*with wild hope*] Antidote!

FITZ If an antidote would not be too much of an anti-climax

ADOLPHUS Anti-climax be blowed! Do you think I am going to die to please the critics? Out with your antidote Quick!

FITZ The best antidote to the poison I have given you is lime, plenty of lime

ADOLPHUS Lime! You mock me! Do you think I carry lime about in my pockets?

FITZ There is the plaster ceiling

MAGNESIA Yes, the ceiling Saved, saved, saved!

All three frantically shy boots at the ceiling

Flakes of plaster rain down which Adolphus devours, at first ravenously, then with a marked falling off in relish

MAGNESIA [*picking up a huge slice*] Take this, Adolphus it is the largest [*she crams it into his mouth*]

FITZ Ha! a lump off the cornice! Try this

ADOLPHUS [*desperately*] Stop! stop!

MAGNESIA Do not stop You will die. [*She tries to stuff him again*]

ADOLPHUS [*resolutely*] I prefer death

MAGNESIA and FITZ [*throwing themselves on their knees on either side of him*] For our sakes, Adolphus, persevere.

ADOLPHUS No unless you can supply lime in liquid form, I must perish Finish that ceiling I cannot and will not

MAGNESIA I have a thought—an inspiration My bust [*She snatches it from its pedestal and brings it to him*]

ADOLPHUS [*gazing fondly at it*] Can I resist it?

FITZ Try the bun

ADOLPHUS [*gnawing at the knot of hair at the back of the bust's head it makes him ill*] Yah, I cannot. I cannot Not even your bust, Magnesia. Do not ask me Let me die.

FITZ [*pressing the bust on him*] Force yourself to take a mouthful Down with it, Adolphus!

ADOLPHUS. Useless It would not stay down Water! Some fluid! Ring for something to drink [*he chokes*]

MAGNESIA I will save you [*she rushes to the bell and rings*]

Phyllis, in her night-gown, with her hair prettily made up into a chevaux de frise of crocuses with pink and yellow curl papers, rushes in straight to Magnesia

PHYLLIS [*hysterically*] My beloved mistress, once more we meet [*She sees Fitztollemache and screams*] Ah! ah! ah! A man! [*She sees Adolphus*] Men!! [*She flies; but Fitztollemache seizes her by the night-gown just as she is escaping*] Unhand me, villain!

FITZ This is no time for prudery, girl. Mr Bastable is dying.

PHYLLIS [*with concern*] Indeed, sir? I hope he will not think it unfeeling of me to appear at his deathbed in curl papers

MAGNESIA We know you have a good heart, Phyllis Take this [*giving her the bust*], dissolve it in a jug of hot water, and bring it back instantly. Mr Bastable's life depends on your haste.

PHYLLIS [*hesitating*] It do seem a pity, dont it, my lady, to spoil your lovely bust?

ADOLPHUS. Tush! This craze for fine art is beyond all bounds Off with you [*he pushes her out*]. Drink, drink, drink! My entrails are parched Drink! [*he rushes deliriously to the gazogene*]

FITZ [*rushing after him*] Madman, you forget! It is poisoned!

ADOLPHUS I dont care. Drink, drink! [*They wrestle madly for the gazogene In the struggle they squirt all its contents anay, mostly into one another's face. Adolphus at last flings Fitztollemache to the floor, and puts the spout into his mouth*]. Empty! empty! [*with a shriek of despair he collapses on the bed, clasping the gazogene like a baby, and weeping over it*]

FITZ [*aside to Magnesia*] Magnesia I have always pretended not to notice it, but you keep a siphon for your private use in my hat-box

MAGNESIA I use it for washing old lace, but no matter. he shall have it [*she produces a siphon from the hat-box, and offers a tumbler of soda-water to Adolphus*]

ADOLPHUS Thanks, thanks, oh, thanks! [*he drinks. A terrific fizzing is heard He starts up screaming*] Help! help! The ceiling is effervescing! I am BURSTING! [*He wallows convulsively on the bed*]

FITZ Quick! the rug strap! [*They pack him with blankets and strap him*] Is that tight enough?

MAGNESIA [*anxiously*] Will you hold, do you think?

ADOLPHUS The peril is past. The soda-water has gone flat.

MAGNESIA and FITZ Thank heaven!

Phyllis returns with a washstand en'er, in which she has dissolved the bust.

MAGNESIA [*snatching it*] At last!

FITZ You are saved Drain it to the dregs Fitztollemache holds the lip of the en'er to Adolphus's mouth and gradually raises it until it stands upside down Adolphus's efforts to swallow it are fearful, Phyllis thumping his back when he chokes, and Magnesia loosening the straps when he moans. At last, with a sigh of relief, he sinks back in the women's arms Fitz shakes the empty en'er upside down like a potman shaking the froth out of a flagon

ADOLPHUS. How inexpressibly soothing to the chest! A delicious numbness steals through all my members. I would sleep.

MAGNESIA

FITZ

PHYLLIS

[*whispering*] Let him sleep

He sleeps Celestial harps are heard, but their chords cease on the abrupt entrance of the landlord, a vulgar person in pyjamas

THE LANDLORD Eah! Eah! Wots this? Wots all this noise? Ah kin ennybody sleep through it? [*Looking at the floor and ceiling*] Ello! wot you bin doin te maw ceilin?

FITZ Silence, or leave the room If you wake that man he dies

THE LANDLORD If e kin sleep through the noise you three mikes e kin sleep through ennythink

MAGNESIA Detestable vulgarian your pronunciation jars on the finest chords of my nature Begone!

THE LANDLORD [*looking at Adolphus*] Aw downt blieve eze esleep Aw blieve eze dead [*Calling*] Pleece! Pleece! Merder! [*A blue halo plays mysteriously on the door, which opens and reveals a policeman Thunder*] Eah, pleecmin these three's bin an merdered this gent between em, an naw tore moy ahse dahn

THE POLICEMAN [*offended*] Policeman, indeed! Wheres your manners?

FITZ Officer—

THE POLICEMAN [*with distinguished consideration*] Sir?

FITZ As between gentlemen—

THE POLICEMAN [*bowing*] Sir to you

FITZ [*bowing*] I may inform you that my friend had an acute attack of indigestion No carbonate of soda being available, he swallowed a portion of this man's ceiling [*Pointing to Adolphus*] Behold the result!

THE POLICEMAN The ceiling was poisoned! Well, of all the artful—[*he collars the landlord*] I arrest you for wilful murder

THE LANDLORD [*appealing to the heavens*] Ow, is this jestice! Ah could aw tell e wiz gowin te eat moy ceilin?

THE POLICEMAN [*releasing him*] True The case is more complicated than I thought [*He tries to lift Adolphus's arm but cannot*] Stiff already

THE LANDLORD [*trying to lift Adolphus's leg*] An' precious evvy [*Feeling the calf*] Woy, eze gorn ez awd ez niles

FITZ [*rushing to the bed*] What is this?

MAGNESIA Oh, say not he is dead Phyllis fetch a doctor [*Phyllis runs out They all try to lift Adolphus, but he is perfectly stiff, and as heavy as lead*] Rouse him Shake him

THE POLICEMAN [*exhausted*] Whew! Is he a man or a statue? [*Magnesia utters a piercing scream*] Whats wrong, Miss?

MAGNESIA [*to Fitz*] Do you not see yhat has happened?

FITZ [*striking his forehead*] Horror on horror's head!

THE LANDLORD Wotjemean?

MAGNESIA The plaster has set inside him The officer was right he is indeed a living statue

Magnesia flings herself on the stony breast of Adolphus Fitztollemache buries his head in his hands, and his chest heaves convulsively The policeman takes a small volume from his pocket and consults it

THE POLICEMAN This case is not provided for in my book of instructions It dont seem no use trying artificial respiration, do it? [*To the landlord*] Here! lend a hand, you We'd best take him and set him up in Trafalgar Square

THE LANDLORD Aushd pat im in the cestern an worsh it aht of im

Phyllis comes back with a Doctor

PHYLLIS The medical man, my lady

THE POLICEMAN A poison case, sir

THE DOCTOR Do you mean to say that an unqualified person! a layman! has dared to administer poison in my district?

THE POLICEMAN [*raising Magnesia tenderly*] It looks like it Hold up, my lady

THE DOCTOR Not a moment must be lost The patient must be kept awake at all costs Constant and violent motion is necessary

He snatches Magnesia from the Policeman, and rushes her about the room

FITZ Stop! That is not the poisoned person!

THE DOCTOR It is you, then Why did you not say so before?

He seizes Fitztollemache and rushes him about

THE LANDLORD Naow, naow, thet ynt im

THE DOCTOR What, you!

He pounces on the Landlord and rushes him round

THE LANDLORD Eah! chack it [*He trips the Doctor up Both fall*] Jest owld this leonatic, will you, Mister Horficer?

THE POLICEMAN [*dragging both of them to their feet*] Come out of it, will you You must all come with me to the station.

Thunder

MAGNESIA What! In this frightful storm!

The hail patters noisily on the window

PHYLLIS I think it's raining

The wind howls

THE LANDLORD It's thanderin and lawtnin.

FITZ It's dangerous

THE POLICEMAN [*drawing his baton and whistle*]
If you wont come quietly, then—

He whistles. A fearful flash is followed by an appalling explosion of heaven's artillery. A thunderbolt enters the room, and strikes the helmet of the devoted constable, whence it is attracted to the waistcoat of the doctor by the lancet in his pocket. Finally it leaps with fearful force on the landlord, who, being of a gross and spongy nature, absorbs the electric fluid at the cost of his life. The others look on horror-stricken as the three victims, after reeling, jostling, cannoning through a ghastly quadrille, at last sink inanimate on the carpet.

MAGNESIA [*listening at the doctor's chest*]
Dead!

FITZ [*kneeling by the landlord, and raising his hand, which drops with a thud*] Dead!

PHYLLIS [*seizing the looking-glass and holding it to the Policeman's lips*] Dead!

FITZ [*solemnly rising*] The copper attracted the lightning.

MAGNESIA [*rising*] After life's fitful fever they sleep well. Phyllis sweep them up.

Phyllis replaces the looking-glass on the dressing-table, takes up the fan; and fans the Policeman, who rolls away like a leaf before the wind to the wall. She disposes similarly of the landlord and doctor.

PHYLLIS. Will they be in your way if I leave them there until morning, my lady?

Or shall I bring up the ashpan and take them away?

MAGNESIA. They will not disturb us Goodnight, Phyllis

PHYLLIS Goodnight, my lady. Goodnight, sir.

She retires

MAGNESIA. And now, husband, let us perform our last sad duty to our friend. He has become his own monument. Let us erect him. He is heavy; but love can do much.

FITZ. A little leverage will get him on his feet. Give me my umbrella.

MAGNESIA True

She hands him the umbrella, and takes up the bootjack. They get them under Adolphus's back, and prize him up on his feet.

FITZ. That's done it! Whew!

MAGNESIA [*kneeling at the left hand of the statue*] For ever and for ever, Adolphus

FITZ [*kneeling at the right hand of the statue*] The rest is silence

The Angels sing Bill Bailey. The statue raises its hands in an attitude of blessing, and turns its helmet face to heaven as the curtain falls National Anthem

ATTENDANTS [*in front*] All out for the next performance. Pass along, please, ladies and gentlemen: pass along.

THE END

XXXVIII

THE FASCINATING FOUNDLING

A DISGRACE TO THE AUTHOR

Morning. Office of the Lord Chancellor. Door on the right leading to his private room, near the fireplace. Door on the left leading to the public staircase. Mercer, an elderly clerk, seated at work. Enter, to him, through the public door, Horace Brabazon, a smart and beautiful young man of nineteen, dressed in the extremity of fashion, with a walking stick.

BRABAZON. I want to see the Lord Chancellor.

MERCER. Have you an appointment?

BRABAZON. No.

MERCER. Then you cant see the Lord Chancellor

BRABAZON. I tell you I must see him

MERCER. I tell you you cant. Look here. do you think the Lord Chancellor's a palmist or a hair doctor that people can rush in out of the street and see him whenever they want to?

BRABAZON. That speech was meant to insult and humiliate me. I make it a rule to fight people who attempt to insult and humiliate me [*Throwing away his stick*] Put up your hands. [*He puts up his own*]

MERCER. Here. you let me alone. You leave this office, d'ye hear; or I'll have the police in on you.

BRABAZON. You are face to face with your destiny; and your destiny is to fight me. Be

He sleeps Celestial harps are heard; but their chords cease on the abrupt entrance of the landlord, a vulgar person in pujamas

THE LANDLORD Eah! Eah! Wots this? Wots all this noise? Ah kin ennybody sleep through it? [*Looking at the floor and ceiling*] Ello! wot you bin doin te maw ceilin?

FITZ Silence, or leave the room If you wake that man he dies

THE LANDLORD If e kin sleep through the noise you three mikes e kin sleep through ennythink

MAGNESIA Detestable vulgarian your pronunciation jars on the finest chords of my nature Begone!

THE LANDLORD [*looking at Adolphus*] Aw down't blieve eze esleep Aw blieve eze dead [*Calling*] Pleece! Pleece! Merder! [*A blue halo plays mysteriously on the door, which opens and reveals a policeman Thunder*] Eah, pleecemin these three's bin an merdered this gent between em, an naw tore moy ahse dahn

THE POLICEMAN [*offended*] Policeman, indeed! Wheres your manners?

FITZ Officer—

THE POLICEMAN [*with distinguished consideration*] Sir?

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PHYLLIS Goodnight, my lady Goodnight, sir

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THE END

XXXVIII

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MERCER I tell you you cant Look here do you think the Lord Chancellor's a palmist or a hair doctor that people can rush in out of the street and see him whenever they want to?

BRABAZON That speech was meant to insult and humiliate me I make it a rule to fight people who attempt to insult and humiliate me [*Throwing away his stick*] Put up your hands [*He puts up his own*]

MERCER Here you let me alone You leave this office, d'y'e hear, or I'll have the police in on you

BRABAZON. You are face to face with your destiny, and your destiny is to fight me. Be

quick, I'm going to begin Dont look pale I scorn to take you by surprise I shall lead off with my left on your right eye Put them up

MERCER I aint going to fight you Let me alone, will you? I said nothing to you

BRABAZON Liar and slave Fight, I tell you fight

MERCER Oh, was there ever the like of this? Dont make such a noise

BRABAZON I'm making it on purpose I want you to fight because it'll make more noise than anything else The Lord Chancellor will come to see what the noise is about if only it's loud enough Time! [*he spars*]

MERCER [*retreating to the fireplace and snatching up the poker*] Ah, would you? You come near me, and I'll split your head open, I will

BRABAZON [*snatching up the tongs, and engaging him in a stage fight of the noisiest*] Lay on, Macduff, and damned be he that first cries Hold! Enough!

The Lord Chancellor enters indignantly

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Whats this? Who is this gentleman?

BRABAZON The Lord Chancellor Good [*To Mercer*] Hence, horrible shadow unreal mockery, hence My lord, I have called on professional business In the matter of Brabazon, an infant

THE LORD CHANCELLOR If you are a solicitor, sir, you must be aware that this is not the proper way to approach the Court

BRABAZON I approach you as the father of all the orphans in Chancery

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Sir—

BRABAZON Dont fly out I'll explain everything You remember the matter of Brabazon, an infant Come, now! frankly as man to man you do remember the matter of Brabazon, an infant.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR There is such a case, I believe

BRABAZON Of course there is. Well, I'm the infant I'm Brabazon I'll call thee Hamlet! King! father! Royal Dane wilt thou not answer me? [*Prosaically*] Now you see, dont you?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR You are young Horace Brabazon, are you?

BRABAZON I am, my lord Such is life!

THE LORD CHANCELLOR You are a ward of the Court, and you have systematically disobeyed every order made in your case

BRABAZON The orders were unreasonable Fatuous, in fact

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Sir—

BRABAZON Let me explain One of the orders was that I was to go into the Church

THE LORD CHANCELLOR At your own desire.

BRABAZON Exactly But I should not have been indulged I was too young How did I know what was good for me? I put it to you as one man to another do I look like an archbishop?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Stuff, sir

BRABAZON As you say, nothing could have been more idiotic You ought to have known better No the Church is not in my line Nature intended me for the stage The Unreal Mockery here was practising Macduff with me when you came in Now what I want to know is, can you get me an engagement? As your ward, I have a right to expect that of you You must know lots of people who could give me a start And theres another thing very important I— Oh, by the way, wont you sit down? Excuse me keeping you standing all this time Macduff a chair

THE LORD CHANCELLOR [*with ironic politeness*] You are too good [*He sits down*]

BRABAZON Dont mention it Well, you know I want some good home influence to steady me You see you cant steady me youre too much occupied here with your shop besides, you may shake a loose leg yourself occasionally for all the public knows, eh? Even if you are virtuous, I should probably lead you astray No what I want is a wife Not a young woman, you know Someone old enough to be my mother say thirty or so. I adore a mature woman Not old enough to be your mother, you understand old enough to be my mother I attach some importance to that distinction, so be good enough to bear it in mind. One mustnt overdo these notions

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Mr Mercer, will you be good enough to make a careful note of this gentleman's requirements an engagement at a leading theatre to play Macbeth, and a wife of quiet habits and grave disposition. Anything else, Mr Brabazon?

BRABAZON Nothing today, thank you. And now, I know better than to take up the time of a busy man Happy to have made your acquaintance So long! Ta, ta, Macduff

He goes out

THE LORD CHANCELLOR What do you mean

by letting this lunatic in, Mr Mercer? I'm extremely annoyed

MERCER. I didnt let him in, my lord He came in. I was keeping him from you at the risk of my life when you came in to ask what the noise was

THE LORD CHANCELLOR [*with emotion*] My faithful Mercer

MERCER. My honored master. [*They shake hands, weeping*]

THE LORD CHANCELLOR We were happy together until this man came between us

MERCER Let us try to forget him, my lord [*Turns to his desk and sees Brabazon's walking stick on the floor*] My lord, he has left his walking stick behind He will return for it Let us fly [*He picks it up and puts it on the desk*]

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Nonsense, Mercer. we have no aeroplane; and if we had we shouldnt know how to use it Hark! A visitor at the door [*They both rush to it The handle is turned*] Tell him we have both gone out

MERCER Useless, my lord he is a man of strong reasoning powers he would conclude, on hearing our voices, that we were both within

A WOMAN'S VOICE Is anybody there? Let me in [*She rattles the door*]

THE LORD CHANCELLOR That is the voice of a young and probably beautiful woman

MERCER It is, my lord

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Then why the dickens dont you open the door instead of striking melodramatic attitudes? How dare you keep the lady waiting? I'm very much annoyed

MERCER I'm sorry, my lord. [*He opens the door*]

Anastasia Vulliamy enters

ANASTASIA [*to Mercer*] Is this the Lord Chancellor's?

MERCER Yes

ANASTASIA Sir Cardonius Boshington's?

MERCER Yes, maam

ANASTASIA Are you the Lord Chancellor?

MERCER No, maam Leastways, not yet

ANASTASIA What are you?

MERCER I'm the Lord Chancellor's—

ANASTASIA Secretary?

MERCER Well, hardly that, maam If you ask me, I should say I was a sort of what you might call a clerk-valet to his lordship

ANASTASIA. Are you a gentleman?

MERCER [*staggered*] Well, thats a poser, Miss, really I'm in a manner of speaking

a gentleman.

ANASTASIA. In what manner of speaking are you a gentleman?

MERCER. Well, Miss, I'm a gentleman to my tobacconist Every man is a gentleman to his tobacconist. The parliamentary candidate for Hornsey always addresses me as a gentleman But then he aint particular leastways, not at election times. You see, Miss, there are three classes of gentry in this country

ANASTASIA Only three?

MERCER Only three, maam

ANASTASIA How do you tell one from the other?

MERCER. You tell by the railway porters, Miss The real upper class gives them a shilling, the upper middle class sixpence, and the lower middle, tuppence. I give tuppence myself

ANASTASIA. And which particular class of gentleman is it, pray, that gives a lady a chair?

MERCER Oh, I'm sure I beg your pardon, Miss [*He places a chair for her*]

ANASTASIA Thanks And now will you be good enough to tell Sir Cardonius Boshington that Miss Anastasia Vulliamy wishes to see him?

MERCER [*to the Lord Chancellor*] Miss Anaesthesia Vulliamy, my lord, to see you.

ANASTASIA [*springing up*] Do you mean to tell me that this old man in livery is the great Chancellor?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR At your service, Miss Vulliamy

ANASTASIA [*producing a newspaper*] Quite impossible. I have here an article on Sir Cardonius, headed Our Great Chancellor, and the description does not correspond in the least [*Reading*] "No man of our time has succeeded in tempering the awe inspired by a commanding stature and majestic presence with a love and confidence which even the youngest and most timid ward of the Court feels at the sound of his kindly voice and the encouraging beam, twinkling with humor, of his tender grey eyes " Do you mean to tell me that thats you?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. It is not for me to say how far the description is an accurate or a happy one, madam, but I believe I am the person intended by the writer

MERCER [*producing another paper*] Perhaps youd recognize this better, Miss Sir Car-

domus and me is on opposite sides in politics

ANASTASIA [*taking the paper and reading at the place he indicates*] "How much longer will the nation allow this despicable pantaloons to occupy the woollack—" Whats the woollack?

MERCER What the Lord Chancellor sits on in the House of Lords, Miss

ANASTASIA [*continuing her reading*] "whose contents only too strongly resemble those of his own head" Thats a nasty one, you know isnt it? It means that your brains are woolly, doesnt it?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Its meaning is entirely beneath my notice I'm surprised, Mercer, to find you in possession of a scurrilous rag of this character We may differ in our opinions, but if any paper taken in by me were to speak of you in such unbecoming terms, I should never open it again

MERCER Well, my lord, politics is politics, and after all, what is politics if it isnt shewing up the other side? When I pay a penny for a paper Ive a right to get value for my money the same as any other man

ANASTASIA But I dont understand [*To the Chancellor*] Are you a despicable pantaloons? The other paper says your name will be cherished by the warm hearts of the English people when Eldon and Sir Thomas More are forgotten I thought that whatever is in the papers must be true How do you explain being a great Chancellor and a despicable pantaloons at the same time?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR I take it that the excellent journal from which you first quoted has put all considerations of party aside, and simply endeavored to place before you a dispassionate estimate of such modest services as I have been able to render to my country. The other paper gives you nothing but the vituperative ravings of an illiterate penny-a-liner blinded by party passion

MERCER. You should never read more than one paper, Miss It unsettles the mind, let alone the waste of a penny

ANASTASIA Well, its a great relief to me to hear that the Great Chancellor paper is the right one [*To the Lord Chancellor*] You think I may believe everything it says?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. I trust I shall not disappoint any favorable opinion you may have founded on it

ANASTASIA It says here that though you are stern with the worthless and merciless

to the impostor, yet your mature wisdom and unparalleled legal knowledge are freely at the service of all deserving persons, and that no distressed suitor has ever been turned empty away from your door

THE LORD CHANCELLOR That refers to my private house, madam. I dont keep food here.

MERCER I have a sandwich for my lunch, Miss Sooner than send you empty away, I would give it to you, Miss, most joyfully

ANASTASIA I ask, not charity, but justice

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Madam I must request you to speak like a lady and not like a procession of the unemployed The House of Lords always gives charity and never gives justice

MERCER The House of Lords will find itself unemployed one of these days, if you ask me

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. Silence, Mercer Have the goodness to keep your Radicalism to yourself in the presence of this lady

ANASTASIA Why do you allow your clerk to be a Radical?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Well, madam, to make him a Conservative and an Imperialist I should have to raise his salary very considerably, and I prefer to save money and put up with a Radical

ANASTASIA Youll excuse me asking you all these questions, but as Ive decided, after what the paper says, that you are the man to advise me and be a father to me, its very important that you should be quite all right, isnt it?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR But its not my business to be a father to every young lady who walks into my office

ANASTASIA Not your business! Why, Whitaker's Almanack says you get £10,000 a year You dont get that for nothing, I suppose [*To Mercer*] By the way, Whitaker doesnt say how much you get

MERCER I get one-fifty

ANASTASIA One-fifty into £5000 goes about 33 times Why does he get 33 times as much as you? Is he thirty-three times as good?

MERCER He thinks so

THE LORD CHANCELLOR I set up no such ridiculous pretension, Mercer

ANASTASIA [*to the Lord Chancellor*] Perhaps youre 33 times as sober How much do you drink every day?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR I am almost a teetotaler A single bottle of burgundy is quite sufficient for me

ANASTASIA [*to Mercer*] Then I suppose you drink 33 bottles of burgundy a day.

MERCER 33 bottles of burgundy a day on one-fifty a year! Not me. It hardly runs to beer on Sundays

ANASTASIA. Well, there must be something awfully wrong about you, you know, if you get only the thirty-third of what he gets.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR No, madam. Mercer is an excellent man in his proper place

ANASTASIA. Then there must be something awfully right about you

THE LORD CHANCELLOR I hope so.

ANASTASIA. I dont see the difference myself

MERCER He's better fed.

ANASTASIA Is he? I should have thought he was too red about the nose to be quite healthy It's the burgundy, I expect. However, I didnt come here to talk about you two. Call it selfish if you will; but I came to talk about myself. The fact is, I'm an orphan At least, I think I am.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. Dont you know?

ANASTASIA. No. I was brought up in what you might politely call a sort of public institution. They found me on the doorstep, you know. Might have happened to anybody, mightnt it?

MERCER [*scandalized*] And you have the audacity to come here and talk up to us as if you was a lady. Be off with you; and be ashamed of yourself, you hussy.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Gently, Mercer, gently. It is not the poor girl's fault

MERCER. Not her fault! Why, she aint anybody's daughter she's only an offspring

ANASTASIA Perhaps I'm his daughter, my lord

MERCER. Oh, you wicked girl! Oh, you naughty story, you! Oh, that I should have lived to have this accusation brought against me. me! a respectable man!

ANASTASIA I had a feeling the moment I saw you

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. The voice of Nature! Oh, Mercer, Mercer!

MERCER. I'll have the law of you for this, I will. Oh, say you dont believe her, my lord Dont drive me mad Say you dont believe her

THE LORD CHANCELLOR I cant disregard the voice of Nature, Mercer. The evidence against you is very black

MERCER Me the father of a common girl found on a workhouse doorstep!

ANASTASIA [*rising most indignantly*] How

dare you presume to say such a thing? A workhouse doorstep indeed! I was found on the doorstep of one of the very best houses in Park Lane.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR [*overwhelmed*] My dear young lady, how can I apologize—

MERCER [*crushed*] I'm sure I beg your pardon most humbly, Miss.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. Forget the rudeness of my clerk. he knows no better Resume your seat, I beg.

MERCER. If I had only known, Miss! Park Lane! I could bite my tongue out for my bad manners, I do assure you

ANASTASIA Say no more Of course you could not know my social position

MERCER. Dont say that, Miss You have Park Lane in every feature

THE LORD CHANCELLOR [*effusively*] In your manners.

MERCER. In your accent.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR In your tone—

MERCER. Address—

THE LORD CHANCELLOR. A je ne sais quoi—

MERCER A tout ensemble—

ANASTASIA You speak French?

MERCER Not a word, Miss, but at the sight of that hat of yours the French fairly burst out of me.

ANASTASIA You are very good—

THE LORD CHANCELLOR } Oh, not at all

MERCER. } Dont mention it.

ANASTASIA Dont begin again I forgive you both Now, attention! I'm a good-hearted but somewhat flighty girl; and I require some serious interest in life to steady me. As I had an ungovernable appetite, and was naturally rather inclined to be stout, I tried politics For you, a man, politics meant the House of Lords. For me, a woman, politics meant Holloway Gaol and the hunger strike. I refused to take food until I was so frightfully hungry that when the Governor—who was a plump, chubby, tempting sort of man, you know—came into my cell and remonstrated with me, I attempted to devour him.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Pardon me I thought you Suffragist lambs prided yourselves on acting always on principle On what principle, may I ask, do you justify an attempt to devour an estimable public official?

ANASTASIA On the Cat and Mouse principle, my lord That is a part of the law of England

MERCER Never Not when the woman is the cat

THE LORD CHANCELLOR May I ask, madam, what the unfortunate mouse did on this occasion?

ANASTASIA He got quite angry, and said he wouldnt have me in his prison another minute—not if I went down on my knees and begged him to let me stay Of course I refused to go, but I had to let the poor man have his way at last, though it took ten wardresses to persuade me to do it I left them simply in ribbons, poor things Prison made a great change in me Before I went in I felt a great want of something to love, but when I came out I felt nothing but a great want of something to eat There were two public houses near the prison One had a placard up "Sausage and Mashed," the other "Sandwich and Small Lloyd George" I visited both in succession, and had two goes of each delicacy I then drove to the Holborn Restaurant and had a five shilling lunch, stopping at three Pearce and Plentys on the way to sustain exhausted nature At the Holborn they refused to serve me with a second lunch, so I went on to the Carlton Of my subsequent experiences at the Savoy, Pagani's, Frascati's, Gatti's, five baked potato men, and a coffee stall, I shall say nothing Suffice it that when at last the craving for food was stilled, the craving for love returned in all its original force I felt I must have something to cherish, to sacrifice myself for You no doubt hold that self-sacrifice is a woman's chief amusement

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Certainly I do

ANASTASIA Any man would Well, what was I to love? My friends recommended marriage a man, in fact But I hesitated to rush at once to so expensive and troublesome an extreme I tried a pet dog, but when it had been stolen for the sixth time by the man I bought it from, I refused to pay any more rewards, and we were parted for ever I tried a cat; but its conduct was so disreputable that I really could not live in the same house with it I adopted the orphan child of a crossing sweeper who was run over, but when its aunt learnt that I had no parents she would not permit it to stay Glad as I must confess I was to get rid of the little beast, my starved heart still ached, my empty arms still longed to gather some beloved object to my breast

THE LORD CHANCELLOR If I can be of any service to you, madam—

ANASTASIA You? You are married, are you not?

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Well, er, yes, I er—I am married

MERCER [*catching her eye*] I'm sorry, Miss, but so am I Still, a divorce would be a matter of only eighty pound or so if we made it a fairly straight case

ANASTASIA Never shall it be said that Anastasia Vulhamy built her happiness on the ruin of another woman's home There are younger and handsomer men than you, my lord there are more genteel characters than Mercer Neither of you, if I may be allowed the expression, is precisely what I should call a peach And I want—oh, I want a peach He must be a young peach Not that I am to be seduced by the fleeting charms of a smooth cheek and a slim figure But it's a necessity of my position as a woman that I should marry someone whom I can bully, because if a woman cant bully her husband, her husband generally bullies her

You, my lord, you will, you can,

Find me a young and foolish man

Into my arms—under my thumb

Let him come, let him come

I fear I am almost dropping into poetry, but the tumult of my emotions carries me away I implore you not to keep me waiting My soul, my soul is thrilling as it never thrilled before My arms, my arms are longing as they never longed before My heart, my heart is beating as it never bet before Every nerve in my body, every fibre in my heart—

Brabazon enters

BRABAZON Excuse me I left my stick, I think—

ANASTASIA [*throwing herself into his arms*] He has come he has come, the very thing I want

BRABAZON Quite out of the question, my dear lady Sir Cardonius will tell you that you are too young, too irresponsible, too impulsive to be anything more to me than an extremely agreeable object of contemplation, and a charming hostess With that object may I venture to propose a marriage to you?

ANASTASIA Silly! that is exactly what I am proposing to you

BRABAZON Not marriage to the same person, I think You, as I understand it, propose to marry me I propose that you should marry one of my friends You can then invite me

to your house, and put on your best company manners for my benefit. He will have the privilege of paying for your hats, and enjoying your no-company manners

MERCER My lord. this man has a giant intellect.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR It will avail him as little as if he were the biggest fool in creation Young man you are lost I argued as you do I tried to get out of it

MERCER I moved all the way from Gospel Oak to Islington to escape, but it was no use

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Beware how you anger her by shewing any reluctance Remember. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

MERCER Whats the good of that nowadays? When that was written a woman would take no for an answer She wont now

ANASTASIA. You will begin walking out with me at once You are only on approval, of course, but if you suit, you may consider next Friday three weeks named as the day.

BRABAZON. But where does the merit come in for me? Where is the moral discipline? Where is the self-sacrifice? You are an agreeable person to marry you would be an act of pure selfishness

ANASTASIA So you think now, dearest You wont think that a year hence I'll take care of that for my own boy

BRABAZON Yes, but look here, you know.

Have you any money?

ANASTASIA. Not a rap.

BRABAZON. And you expect to get a slave for nothing. What cheek!

ANASTASIA. I'm richer than you think, darling. It's true that I'm a poor penniless orphan Doesnt that touch you?

BRABAZON Not in the least.

ANASTASIA Thoughtless boy Have you forgotten that the women who have money always belong to some family or other?

BRABAZON Well?

ANASTASIA Well, a family means relations You cant call your house your own The brothers borrow money The sisters come and stay for months The mother quarrels with your mother

MERCER. Gospel truth, every word of it

THE LORD CHANCELLOR Undeniable [*He sighs deeply*]

ANASTASIA I, my love, am not perfect I am a weak woman I have nothing to cling to but your love, nor any place to rest except your very becoming fancy waistcoat But at least I'm a foundling

BRABAZON [*excited and hopeful*] A foundling?

ANASTASIA I havnt a relation in the world

BRABAZON [*clasping her*] Mine! mine! MINE!!

AYOT ST LAWRENCE,

10th August 1909

THE END

XXXIX

THE MUSIC-CURE

A PIECE OF UTTER NONSENSE

Lord Reginald Fitzambey, a fashionably dressed, rather pretty young man of 22, is prostrate on a sofa in a large hotel drawing room, crying convulsively His doctor is trying to soothe him. The doctor is about a dozen years his senior, and his ways are the ways of a still youthful man who considers himself in smart society as well as professionally attendant on it

The drawing room has tall central doors, at present locked If anyone could enter under these circumstances, he would find on his left a grand piano with the keyboard end towards him, and a smaller door beyond the piano On his right would be the window, and, further on, the sofa

on which the unhappy youth is wallowing, with, close by it, the doctor's chair and a little table accommodating the doctor's hat, a plate, a medicine bottle, a half emptied glass, and a bell call

THE DOCTOR Come come! be a man Now really this is silly You mustnt give way like this I tell you nothing's happened to you Hang it all! it's not the end of the world if you did buy a few shares—

REGINALD [*interrupting him frantically*] I never meant any harm in buying those shares. I am ready to give them up Oh, I never meant any harm in buying those shares.

I never meant any harm in buying those shares [*Clutching the doctor imploringly*] Wont you believe me, Doctor? I never meant any harm in buying those shares I never—

THE DOCTOR [*extricating himself and replacing Reginald on the couch, not very gently*] Of course you didnt I know you didnt

REGINALD I never—

THE DOCTOR [*desperate*] Dont go on saying that over and over again or you will drive us all as distracted as you are yourself This is nothing but nerves Remember that youre in a hotel Theyll put you out if you make a row

REGINALD [*tearfully*] But you dont understand Oh, why wont anybody understand? I never—

THE DOCTOR [*shouting him down*] You never meant any harm in buying those shares This is the four hundredth time youve said it

REGINALD [*wildly*] Then why do you keep asking me the same questions over and over again? It's not fair Ive told you I never meant any harm in—

THE DOCTOR Yes, yes, yes I know, I know You think you made a fool of yourself before that committee Well, you didnt You stood up to it for six days with the coolness of an iceberg and the cheerfulness of an idiot Every member of it had a go at you, and everyone of them, including some of the cleverest cross-examiners in London, fell back baffled before your fatuous self-satisfaction, your impenetrable inability to see any reason why you shouldnt have bought those shares

REGINALD But why shouldnt I have bought them? I made no secret of it When the Prime Minister ragged me about it I offered to sell him the shares for what I gave for them

THE DOCTOR Yes, after they had fallen six points But never mind that The point for you is that you are an under-secretary in the War Office You knew that the army was going to be put on vegetarian diet, and that the British Maccaroni Trust shares would go up with a rush when this became public And what did you do?

REGINALD I did what any fellow would have done I bought all the shares I could afford

THE DOCTOR You bought a great many more than you could afford

REGINALD But why shouldnt I? Explain it

to me I'm anxious to learn I meant no harm I see no harm Why am I to be badgered because the beastly Opposition papers and all the Opposition rotters on that committee try to make party capital out of it by saying that it was disgraceful? It wasnt disgraceful it was simple commonsense I'm not a financier, but you cant persuade me that if you happen to know that certain shares are going to rise you shouldnt buy them It would be flying in the face of Providence not to And they wouldnt see that They pretended not to see it They worried me, and kept asking me the same thing over and over again, and wrote blackguardly articles about me—

THE DOCTOR And you got the better of them all because you couldnt see their point of view But what beats me is why you broke down afterwards

REGINALD Everyone was against me I thought the committee a pack of fools, and I as good as told them so But everyone took their part The governor said I had disgraced the family name My brothers said I ought to resign from my clubs My mother said that all her hopes of marrying me to a rich woman were shattered And I'd done nothing absolutely nothing to what other chaps are doing every day

THE DOCTOR Well, the long and short of it is that officials mustnt gamble

REGINALD But I wasnt gambling I knew It isnt gambling if you know that the shares will go up Its a cert

THE DOCTOR Well, all I can tell you is that if you werent a son of the Duke of Dunmow, youd have to resign, and—

REGINALD [*breaking down*] Oh, stop talking to me about it Let me alone I cant bear it. I never meant any harm in buying those shares I never meant any harm—

THE DOCTOR Sh-sh-sh-sh-sh! There I shouldnt have started the subject again Take some of this valerian [*he puts the glass to Reginald's lips*] Thats right Now youre better

REGINALD [*exhausted but calm*] Why does valerian soothe me when it excites cats? Theres a question to reflect on! You know, they ought to have made me a philosopher

THE DOCTOR Philosophers are born, not made

REGINALD Fine old chestnut, that Everybodys born, not made

THE DOCTOR Youre getting almost clever

I dont like it. youre not yourself today I wish I could take your mind off your troubles Suppose you try a little music

REGINALD I cant play. My fingers wont obey me. And I cant stand the sound of the piano I sounded a note this morning, and it made me scream

THE DOCTOR. But why not get somebody to play to you?

REGINALD. Whom could I get, even if I could bear it? You cant play.

THE DOCTOR Well: I'm not the only person in the world.

REGINALD. If you bring anyone else in here, I shall go mad I'll throw myself out of the window. I cant bear the idea of music I dread it, hate it, loathe it.

THE DOCTOR. Thats very serious, you know REGINALD. Why is it serious?

THE DOCTOR Well, what would become of you without your turn for music? You have absolutely no capacity in any other direction

REGINALD I'm in Parliament And I'm an under-secretary.

THE DOCTOR. Thats because your father is a Duke If you were in a Republic you wouldnt be trusted to clean boots, unless your father was a millionaire No, Reginald: the day you give up vamping accompaniments and playing the latest ragtimes by ear, youre a lost man socially.

REGINALD [*deprecating*] Oh, I say!

THE DOCTOR [*rising*] However, perhaps it's too soon for you to try the music-cure yet It was your mother's idea; but I'll call and tell her to wait a day or two I think she meant to send somebody to play I must be off now. Look in again later Meanwhile, sleep as much as you can Or you might read a little

REGINALD What can I read?

THE DOCTOR Try the Strand Magazine.

REGINALD. But it's so frightfully intellectual It would overtax my brain

THE DOCTOR. Oh, well, I suppose it would Well, sleep. Perhaps I'd better give you something to send you off [*he produces a medicine case*]

REGINALD Whats this? Veronal?

THE DOCTOR. Dont be alarmed Only the old-fashioned remedy: opium Take this [*Reginald takes a pill*]: that will do the trick, I expect If you find after half an hour that it has only excited you, take another. I'll leave one for you [*he puts one on the plate, and*

pockets his medicine case]

REGINALD Better leave me a lot I like pills

THE DOCTOR Thank you I'm not treating you with a view to a coroner's inquest. You know, dont you, that opium is a poison?

REGINALD Yes, opium But not pills

THE DOCTOR Well, Heaven forbid that I, a doctor, should shake anybody's faith in pills. But I shant leave you enough to kill you [*He puts on his hat*]

REGINALD Youll tell them, wont you, not to let anyone in Really and truly I shall throw myself out of the window if any stranger comes in I should go out of my mind.

THE DOCTOR None of us have very far to go to do that, my young friend Ta ta, for the moment [*he makes for the central doors*]

REGINALD. You cant go out that way. I made my mother lock it and take away the key. I felt sure theyd let somebody in that way if she didnt Youll have to go the way you came.

THE DOCTOR [*returning*] Right Now let me see you settle down before I go. I want you to be asleep before I leave the room

Reginald settles himself to sleep with his face to the back of the sofa The doctor goes softly to the side door and goes out

REGINALD [*sitting up wildly and staring affrightedly at the piano*] Doctor! Doctor! Help!!!

THE DOCTOR [*returning hastily*] What is it?

REGINALD [*after another doubtful look at the piano*] Nothing [*He composes himself to sleep again*]

THE DOCTOR Nothing! There must have been something or you wouldnt have yelled like that [*Pulling Reginald over so as to see his face*] Here! what was it?

REGINALD. Well, it's gone

THE DOCTOR Whats gone?

REGINALD The crocodile

THE DOCTOR The crocodile!

REGINALD. Yes It laughed at me, and was going to play the piano with its tail

THE DOCTOR. Opium in small doses doesnt agree with you, my young friend [*Taking the spare pill from the plate*] I shall have to give you a second pill

REGINALD But suppose two crocodiles come!

THE DOCTOR They wont If anything comes it will be something pretty this time. Thats how opium acts Anyhow, youll be fast asleep in ten minutes Here Take it

REGINALD [*after taking the pill*] It was awfully silly of me But you know I really saw the thing

THE DOCTOR You neednt trouble about what you see with your eyes shut [*He turns to the door*]

REGINALD Would you mind looking under the sofa to make sure the crocodile isnt there?

THE DOCTOR Why not look yourself? that would be more convincing

REGINALD I darent

THE DOCTOR You duffer! [*He looks*] All serene No crocodile Now go bye bye [*He goes out*]

Reginald again composes himself to sleep. Somebody unlocks the central doors. A lovely lady enters with a bouquet in her hand. She looks about her, takes a letter from wherever she carries letters, and starts on a voyage of discovery round the room, checking her observations by the contents of the letter. The piano seems specially satisfactory she nods as she sees it. Reginald seems also to be quite expected. She does not speak to him. When she is quite satisfied that she is in the right room, she goes to the piano and tantalizes the expectant audience for about two minutes by putting down her flowers on the candle-stand, taking off her gloves and putting them with the flowers, taking off half a dozen diamond rings in the same way, sitting down to the keyboard and finding it too near to the piano, then too far, then too high, then too low in short, exhausting all the tricks of the professional pianist before she at last strikes the keys and preludes brilliantly. At the sound, Reginald, with a scream, rolls from the sofa and writhes on the carpet in horrible contortions. She stops playing, amazed.

REGINALD Oh! Oh! Oh! The crocodiles! Stop! Ow! Oh! [*He looks at the piano and sees the lady*] Oh I say!

THE LADY What on earth do you mean by making that noise when I'm playing? Have you no sense? Have you no manners?

REGINALD [*sitting on the floor*] I'm awfully sorry

THE LADY Sorry! Why did you do it?

REGINALD I thought you were a crocodile

THE LADY What a silly thing to say! Do I look like a crocodile?

REGINALD No

THE LADY Do I play like a crocodile!

REGINALD [*cautiously rising and approaching her*] Well, you know, it's so hard to know how a crocodile would play

THE LADY Stuff! [*She resumes her playing*]

REGINALD Please! [*He stops her by shutting the keyboard lid*] Who let you in?

THE LADY [*rising threateningly*] What is that to you, pray?

REGINALD [*retreating timidly*] It's my room, you know

THE LADY It's nothing of the sort It's the Duchess of Dunmow's room I know it's the right one, because she gave me the key; and it was the right key

REGINALD But what did she do that for? Who are you, if you dont mind my asking?

THE LADY I do mind your asking It's no business of yours However, youd better know to whom you are speaking I am Strega Thundridge [*She pronounces it Strayga*]

REGINALD What! The female Paderewski!

STREGA Pardon me I believe Mr Paderewski has been called the male Thundridge, but no gentleman would dream of repeating such offensive vulgarities Will you be good enough to return to your sofa, and hold your tongue, or else leave the room

REGINALD But, you know, I am ill

STREGA Then go to bed, and send for a doctor [*She sits down again to the keyboard*]

REGINALD [*falling on his knees*] You mustnt play You really mustnt I cant stand it I shall simply not be myself if you start playing

STREGA [*raising the lid*] Then I shall start at once

REGINALD [*running to her on his knees and snatching at her hands*] No, you shant [*She rises indignantly. He holds on to her hands, but exclaims ecstatically*] Oh, I say, what lovely hands youve got!

STREGA The ideal! [*She hurls him to the carpet*]

REGINALD [*on the floor staring at her*] You are strong

STREGA My strength has been developed by playing left hand octave passages—like this [*She begins playing Liszt's transcription of Schubert's Erl König*]

REGINALD [*puts his fingers in his ears, but continues to stare at her*]

STREGA [*stopping*] I really cannot play if you keep your ears stopped It is an insult Leave the room

REGINALD But I tell you it's my room.

STREGA [*rising*] Leave the room, or I will ring your bell and have you put out [*She goes to the little table, and poises her fingers over the bell call*]

REGINALD [*rushing to her*] No no: somebody will come if you ring, and I shall go distracted if a stranger comes in. [*With a touch of her left hand she sends him reeling. He appeals to her plaintively*] Dont you see that I am ill?

STREGA I see that you are mentally afflicted. But that doesnt matter to me. The Duchess of Dunmow has engaged me to come to this room and play for two hours. I never break an engagement, especially a two hundred and fifty guinea one. [*She turns towards the piano*]

REGINALD But didnt she tell you anything about me?

STREGA [*turning back to him*] She said there would be a foolish young man in the room, but that I was not to mind him. She assured me you were not dangerous except to yourself. [*Collaring him and holding him bent backwards over the piano*] But I will have no nonsense about not listening. All the world listens when I play. Listen, or go.

REGINALD [*helpless*] But I shall have to sit on the stairs. I darent go into any of the rooms. I should meet people there.

STREGA You will meet plenty of people on the stairs, young man. They are sitting six on each stair, not counting those who are sitting astride the banisters on the chance of hearing me play.

REGINALD How dreadful! [*Tearfully*] Youve no right to bully me like this. I'm ill. I cant bear it. I'll throw myself out of the window.

STREGA [*releasing him*] Do. What an advertisement! It will be really kind of you. [*She goes back to the keyboard and sits down to play*]

REGINALD [*crossing to the window*] Youll be sorry you were so unfeeling when you see my mangled body. [*He opens the window, looks out, shuts it hastily, and retreats with a scream*] Theres a crowd. I darent.

STREGA [*pleased*] Waiting to hear me play. [*she preludes softly*]

REGINALD [*ravished*] Oh! I can stand that, you know.

STREGA [*ironically, still preluding*] Thank you.

REGINALD The fact is, I can play a bit myself.

STREGA [*still preluding*] An amateur, I presume.

REGINALD I have often been told I could make a living at it if I tried. But of course it wouldnt do for a man in my position to lower himself by becoming a professional.

STREGA [*abruptly ceasing to play*] Tactful, that, I dont think! And what do you play, may I ask?

REGINALD Oh, all the very best music.

STREGA For instance?

REGINALD I wish you belonged to me.

STREGA [*rising outraged*] You young black-guard! How dare you?

REGINALD You dont understand: it's the name of a tune. Let me play it for you. [*He sits down at the keyboard*] I dont think you believe I can play.

STREGA Pardon me. I have heard a horse play the harmonium at a music hall. I can believe anything.

REGINALD Aha! [*He plays*] Do you like that?

STREGA. What is it? Is it intended for music?

REGINALD. Oh, you beautiful doll.

STREGA Take that. [*she knocks him sprawling over the keyboard*]! Beautiful doll indeed!

REGINALD. Oh, I say! Look here: thats the name of the tune too. You seem quite ignorant of the best music. Dont you know Rum Tum Tiddle, and Alexander's Rag Time Band, and Take me back to the Garden of Love, and Everybody likes our Mary.

STREGA. Young man. I have never even heard of these abominations. I am now going to educate you musically. I am going to play Chopin, and Brahms, and Bach, and Schumann, and—

REGINALD [*horrified*] You dont mean classical music?

STREGA I do. [*he bolts through the central doors*]

STREGA [*disgusted*] Pig! [*She sits down at the piano again*].

REGINALD [*rushing back into the room*] I forgot the people on the stairs: crowds of them. Oh, what shall I do! Oh dont, Dont, Dont play classical music to me. Say you wont Please.

STREGA [*looks at him enigmatically and softly plays a Liebeslied Waltz*]!

REGINALD Oh, I say. thats rather pretty.

STREGA. Like it?

REGINALD Awfully. Oh, I say, you know. I really do wish you belonged to me. [*Strega suddenly plays a violent Chopin study. He goes into convulsions*]. Oh! Stop! Mercy! Help! Oh please, please!

STREGA [*pausing with her hands raised over the keyboard, ready to pounce on the chords*] Will

you ever say that again?

REGINALD Never I beg your pardon

STREGA [*satisfied*] Hm! [*She drops her hands in her lap*]

REGINALD [*wiping his brow*] Oh, that was fearfully classical

STREGA You want your back stiffened a little, my young friend. Besides, I really cannot earn two hundred and fifty guineas by playing soothing syrup to you. Now prepare for the worst. I'm going to make a man of you

REGINALD How?

STREGA With Chopin's Polonaise in A Flat. Now imagine yourself going into battle [*He runs away as before*] Goose!

REGINALD [*returning as before*] The crowd is worse than ever. Have you no pity?

STREGA. Come here. Don't imagine yourself going into battle. Imagine that you have just been in a battle, and that you have saved your country by deeds of splendid bravery, and that you are going to dance with beautiful women who are proud of you. Can you imagine that?

REGINALD Rathe-e-e-errr. That's how I always do imagine myself

STREGA Right. Now listen [*She plays the first section of the Polonaise. Reginald flinches at first, but gradually braces himself, stiffens, struts, throws up his head and slaps his chest*]. That's better. What a hero! [*After a difficult passage*]. Takes a bit of doing, that, dearest child. [*Coming to the chords which announce the middle section*]. Now for it.

REGINALD [*unable to contain himself*] Oh, this is too glorious. I must have a turn or I shall forget myself

STREGA Can you play this? Nothing but this [*She plays the octave passage in the bass*]

REGINALD Just riddle tiddle, riddle tiddle, riddle tiddle, riddle tiddle? Nothing but that?

STREGA Very softly at first. Like the ticking of a watch. Then louder and louder, as you feel my soul swelling

REGINALD I understand. Just give me those chords again to buck me up to it [*She plays the chords again. He plays the octave passages, and they play the middle section as a duet. At the repeat he cries*]. Again! again!

STREGA It's meant to be played again. Now. They repeat it. At the end of the section she pushes him off the bench on to the floor, and goes on with the Polonaise alone

REGINALD Wonderful woman. I have a

confession to make, a confidence to impart. Your playing draws it from me. Listen, Strega [*she plays a horrible discord*] I mean Miss Thundridge

STREGA That's better, but I prefer Wonderful Woman

REGINALD You are a wonderful woman, you know. Adored one—would you mind my taking a little valerian? I'm so excited [*he takes some*]. A—a—ah! Now I feel that I can speak. Listen to me, goddess. I am not happy. I hate my present existence. I loathe parliament. I am not fit for public affairs. I am condemned to live at home with five coarse and brutal sisters who care for nothing but Alpine climbing, and looping the loop on aeroplanes, and going on deputations, and fighting the police. Do you know what they call me?

STREGA [*playing softly*] What do they call you, dear?

REGINALD They call me a Clinger. Well, I confess it. I am a Clinger. I am not fit to be thrown unprotected upon the world. I want to be shielded. I want a strong arm to lean on, a dauntless heart to be gathered to and cherished, a breadwinner on whose income I can live without the sordid horrors of having to make money for myself. I am a poor little thing, I know, Strega, but I could make a home for you. I have great taste in carpets and pictures. I can cook like anything. I can play quite nicely after dinner. Though you mightn't think it, I can be quite stern and strongminded with servants. I get on splendidly with children. They never talk over my head as grown-up people do. I have a real genius for home life. And I shouldn't at all mind being tyrannized over a little. In fact, I like it. It saves me the trouble of having to think what to do. Oh, Strega, don't you want a dear little domesticated husband who would have no concern but to please you, no thought outside our home, who would be unspotted and unsoiled by the rude cold world, who would never meddle in politics or annoy you by interfering with your profession? Is there any hope for me?

STREGA [*coming away from the piano*] My child, I am a hard, strong, independent, muscular woman. How can you, with your delicate soft nature, see anything to love in me? I should hurt you, shock you, perhaps—yes, let me confess it—I have a violent temper, and might even, in a transport of rage,

beat you

REGINALD. Oh do, do. Dont laugh at this ridiculous confession; but ever since I was a child I have had only one secret longing, and that was to be mercilessly beaten by a splendid, strong, beautiful woman

STREGA [*solemnly*] Reginald—I think your mother spoke of you as Reginald—

REGINALD Rejy.

STREGA I too have a confession to make. I too need some music to speak through. Will you be so good?

REGINALD Angel [*He rushes to the piano and plays sympathetically whilst she speaks*].

STREGA I, too, have had my dream. It has consoled me through the weary hours when I practised scales for eight hours a day. It has pursued me through the applause of admiring thousands in Europe and America. It is a dream of a timid little heart fluttering against mine, of a gentle voice to welcome me home, of a silky moustache to kiss my weary fingers when I return from a Titanic struggle with Tchaikovsky's Concerto in G major, of somebody utterly dependent on me, utterly devoted to me, utterly my own, living

only to be cherished and worshipped by me
REGINALD But you would be angry sometimes terrible, splendid, ruthless, violent You would throw down the thing you loved and trample on it as it clung to your feet

STREGA. Yes—oh, why do you force me to confess it?—I should beat it to a jelly, and then cast myself in transports of remorse on its quivering frame and smother it with passionate kisses.

REGINALD [*transported*] Let it be me, let it be me

STREGA. You dare face this terrible destiny?

REGINALD I embrace it. I adore you I am wholly yours Oh, let me cling, cling, cling

STREGA [*embracing him fiercely*] Nothing shall tear you from my arms now.

REGINALD Nothing I am provided for. Oh how happy this will make my mother!

STREGA. Sweet name the day.

He plays a wedding march. She plays the bass.

AYOT ST LAWRENCE,
21st January 1914.

THE END

XL

TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD

A POLITICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

ACT I

Night. One of the best bedrooms in one of the best suburban villas in one of the richest cities in England. A young lady with an unhealthy complexion is asleep in the bed. A small table at the head of the bed, convenient to her right hand, and crowded with a medicine bottle, a measuring glass, a pill box, a clinical thermometer in a glass of water, a half read book with the place marked by a handkerchief, a powder puff and hand-mirror, and an electric bell handle on a flex, shews that the bed is a sick bed and the young lady an invalid

The furniture includes a very handsome dressing table with silver-backed hairbrushes and toilet articles, a dainty pincushion, a stand of rings, a jewel box of black steel with the lid open and a rope of pearls heaped carelessly half in and half out, a Louis Quinze writing table and chair with inkstand, blotter, and cabinet of stationery, a magnificent wardrobe, a luxurious couch, and a

tall screen of Chinese workmanship which, like the expensive carpet and everything else in the room, proclaims that the owner has money enough to buy the best things at the best shops in the best purchaseable taste

The bed is nearly in the middle of the room, so that the patient's nurses can pass freely between the wall and the head of it. If we contemplate the room from the foot of the bed, with the patient's toes pointing straight at us, we have the door (carefully sandbagged lest a draught of fresh air should creep underneath) level with us in the righthand wall, the couch against the same wall farther away, the window (every ray of moonlight excluded by closed curtains and a dark green spring blind) in the middle of the left wall with the wardrobe on its right and the writing table on its left, the screen at right angles to the wardrobe, and the dressing table against the wall facing us half way between the bed and the couch.

Besides the chair at the writing table there is an

easy chair at the medicine table, and a chair at each side of the dressing table

The room is lighted by invisible cornice lights, and by two mirror lights on the dressing table and a portable one on the writing table, but these are now snatched off, and the only light in action is another portable one on the medicine table, very carefully subdued by a green shade

The patient is sleeping heavily. Near her, in the easy chair, sits a Monster. In shape and size it resembles a human being, but in substance it seems to be made of a luminous jelly with a visible skeleton of short black rods. It droops forward in the chair with its head in its hands, and seems in the last degree wretched

THE MONSTER Oh! Oh! Oh!!! I am so ill! so miserable! Oh, I wish I were dead. Why doesn't she die and release me from my sufferings? What right has she to get ill and make me ill like this? Measles! that's what she's got. Measles! German measles! And she's given them to me, a poor innocent microbe that never did her any harm. And she says that I gave them to her. Oh, is this justice? Oh, I feel so rotten. I wonder what my temperature is: they took it from under her tongue half an hour ago [*Scrutinizing the table and discovering the thermometer in the glass*]. Here's the thermometer: they've left it for the doctor to see instead of shaking it down. If it's over a hundred I'm done for. I daren't look. Oh, can it be that I'm dying? I must look [*It looks, and drops the thermometer back into the glass with a gasping scream*]. A hundred and three! It's all over [*It collapses*].

The door opens, and an elderly lady and a young doctor come in. The lady steals along on tiptoe, full of the deepest concern for the invalid. The doctor is indifferent, but keeps up his bedside manner carefully, though he evidently does not think the case so serious as the lady does. She comes to the bedside on the invalid's left. He comes to the other side of the bed and looks attentively at his patient.

THE ELDERLY LADY [*in a whisper stillant enough to wake the dead*]. She is asleep.

THE MONSTER I should think so. This fool here, the doctor, has given her a dose of the latest fashionable opiate that would keep a cock asleep 'til half past eleven on a May morning.

THE ELDERLY LADY Oh doctor, do you think there is any chance? Can she possibly survive this last terrible complication?

THE MONSTER Measles! He mistook it for

influenza.

THE ELDERLY LADY. It was so unexpected! such a crushing blow! And I have taken such care of her. She is my only surviving child, my pet, my precious one. Why do they all die? I have never neglected the smallest symptom of illness. She has had doctors in attendance on her almost constantly since she was born.

THE MONSTER She has the constitution of a horse or she'd have died like the others.

THE ELDERLY LADY Oh, don't you think, dear doctor—of course you know best, but I am so terribly anxious—don't you think you ought to change the prescription? I had such hopes of that last bottle; but you know it was after that that she developed measles.

THE DOCTOR My dear Mrs Moppy, you may rest assured that the bottle had nothing to do with the measles. It was merely a gentle tonic—

THE MONSTER Strychnine!

THE DOCTOR —to brace her up.

THE ELDERLY LADY But she got measles after it.

THE DOCTOR That was a specific infection, a germ, a microbe.

THE MONSTER Me! Put it all on me.

THE ELDERLY LADY But how did it get in? I keep the windows closed so carefully. And there is a sheet steeped in carbolic acid always hung over the door.

THE MONSTER [*in tears*]. Not a breath of fresh air for me!

THE DOCTOR Who knows? It may have lurked here since the house was built. You never can tell. But you must not worry. It is not serious: a light rubeola. You can hardly call it measles. We shall pull her through, believe me.

THE ELDERLY LADY. It is such a comfort to hear you say so, doctor. I am sure I shall never be able to express my gratitude for all you have done for us.

THE DOCTOR Oh, that is my profession. We do what we can.

THE ELDERLY LADY Yes, but some doctors are dreadful. There was that man at Folkestone—he was impossible. He tore aside the curtain and let the blazing sunlight into the room, though she cannot bear it without green spectacles. He opened the windows and let in all the cold morning air. I told him he was a murderer, and he only said "One guinea, please." I am sure he let in that

microbe.

THE DOCTOR. Oh, three months ago! No: it was not that.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Then what was it? Oh, are you quite quite sure that it would not be better to change the prescription?

THE DOCTOR. Well, I have already changed it.

THE MONSTER. Three times!

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, I know you have, doctor: nobody could have been kinder. But it really did not do her any good. She got worse.

THE DOCTOR. But, my dear lady, she was sickening for measles. That was not the fault of my prescription.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, of course not. You mustn't think that I ever doubted for a moment that everything you did was for the best. Still—

THE DOCTOR. Oh, very well, very well. I will write another prescription.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, thank you, thank you: I felt sure you would. I have so often known a change of medicine work wonders.

THE DOCTOR. When we have pulled her through this attack I think a change of air—

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh no, don't say that. She must be near a doctor who knows her constitution. Dear old Dr Newland knew it so well from her very birth.

THE DOCTOR. Unfortunately, Newland is dead.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Yes, but you bought his practice. I should never be easy in my mind if you were not within call. You persuaded me to take her to Folkestone; and see what happened! No, never again.

THE DOCTOR. Oh, well! [*He shrugs his shoulders resignedly, and goes to the bedside table*] What about the temperature?

THE ELDERLY LADY. The day nurse took it. I haven't dared to look.

THE DOCTOR [*looking at the thermometer*] Hm!

THE ELDERLY LADY [*trembling*] Has it gone up? Oh, doctor!

THE DOCTOR [*hastily shaking the mercury down*] No. Nothing. Nearly normal.

THE MONSTER. Liar!

THE ELDERLY LADY. What a relief!

THE DOCTOR. You must be careful, though. Don't fancy she's well yet. She isn't. She must not get out of bed for a moment. The slightest chill might be serious.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Doctor, are you sure

you are not concealing something from me? Why does she never get well in spite of the fortune I have spent on her illnesses? There must be some deep-rooted cause. Tell me the worst. I have dreaded it all my life. Perhaps I should have told you the whole truth; but I was afraid. Her uncle's stepfather died of an enlarged heart. Is that what it is?

THE DOCTOR. Good gracious, NO! What put that into your head?

THE ELDERLY LADY. But even before this rash broke out there were pimples.

THE MONSTER. Boils! Too many chocolate creams.

THE DOCTOR. Oh, that! Nothing. Her blood is not quite what it should be. But we shall get that right.

THE ELDERLY LADY. You are sure it is not her lungs?

THE DOCTOR. My good lady, her lungs are as sound as a seagull's.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Then it must be her heart. Don't deceive me. She has palpitations. She told me the other day that it stopped for five minutes when that horrid nurse was rude to her.

THE DOCTOR. Nonsense! She wouldn't be alive now if her heart had stopped for five seconds. There is nothing constitutionally wrong. A little below par, that is all. We shall feed her up scientifically. Plenty of good fresh meat. A half bottle of champagne at lunch and a glass of port after dinner will make another woman of her. A chop at breakfast, rather underdone, is sometimes very helpful.

THE MONSTER. I shall die of overfeeding. So will she too: that's one consolation.

THE DOCTOR. Don't worry about the measles. It's really quite a light case.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, you can depend on me for that. Nobody can say that I am a worrier. You won't forget the new prescription?

THE DOCTOR. I will write it here and now [*he takes out his pen and book, and sits down at the writing table*].

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, thank you. And I will go and see what the new night nurse is doing. They take so long with their cups of tea [*she goes to the door and is about to go out when she hesitates and comes back*]. Doctor, I know you don't believe in inoculations; but I can't help thinking she ought to have one. They do so much good.

THE DOCTOR [*almost at the end of his patience*] My dear Mrs Mopply I never said that I dont beheve in inoculations But it is no use inoculating when the patient is already fully infected.

THE ELDERLY LADY But I have found it so necessary myself I was inoculated against influenza three years ago, and I have had it only four times since My sister has it every February. Do, to please me, give her an inoculation I feel such a responsibility if anything is left undone to cure her

THE DOCTOR Oh very well, very well I will see what can be done She shall have both an inoculation and a new prescription Will that set your mind at rest?

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, thank you. You have lifted such a weight from my conscience I feel sure they will do her the greatest good And now excuse me a moment while I fetch the nurse [*She goes out*]

THE DOCTOR. What a perfectly maddening woman!

THE MONSTER [*rising and coming behind him*] Yes aint she?

THE DOCTOR [*startling*] What! Who is that?

THE MONSTER Nobody but me and the patient And you have dosed her so that she wont speak again for ten hours You will overdose that some day

THE DOCTOR. Rubbish! She thought it was an opiate; but it was only an aspirin dissolved in ether. But who am I talking to? I must be drunk.

THE MONSTER Not a bit of it.

THE DOCTOR Then who are you? What are you? Where are you? Is this a trick?

THE MONSTER I'm only an unfortunate sick bacillus

THE DOCTOR. A sick bacillus!

THE MONSTER. Yes I suppose it never occurs to you that a bacillus can be sick like anyone else

THE DOCTOR. Whats the matter with you?

THE MONSTER. Measles

THE DOCTOR. Rot! The microbe of measles has never been discovered. If there is a microbe it cannot be measles. it must be parameasles

THE MONSTER Great Heavens! what are parameasles?

THE DOCTOR. Something so like measles that nobody can see any difference.

THE MONSTER. If there is no measles microbe why did you tell the old girl that her

daughter caught measles from a microbe?

THE DOCTOR Patients insist on having microbes nowadays If I told her there is no measles microbe she wouldnt believe me, and I should lose my patient. When there is no microbe I invent one Am I to understand that you are the missing microbe of measles, and that you have given them to this patient here?

THE MONSTER No she gave them to me These humans are full of horrid diseases they infect us poor microbes with them, and you doctors pretend that it is we that infect them. You ought all to be struck off the register.

THE DOCTOR. We should be, if we talked like that.

THE MONSTER Oh, I feel so wretched! Please cure my measles

THE DOCTOR I cant I cant cure any disease. But I get the credit when the patients cure themselves When she cures herself she will cure you too.

THE MONSTER But she cant cure herself because you and her mother wont give her a dog's chance You wont let her have even a breath of fresh air I tell you she's naturally as strong as a rhinoceros Curse your silly bottles and inoculations! Why dont you chuck them and turn faith healer?

THE DOCTOR. I am a faith healer You dont suppose I believe the bottles cure people? But the patient's faith in the bottle does

THE MONSTER Youre a humbug thats what you are.

THE DOCTOR Faith is humbug But it works
THE MONSTER. Then why do you call it science?

THE DOCTOR. Because people believe in science. The Christian Scientists call their fudge science for the same reason.

THE MONSTER The Christian Scientists let their patients cure themselves. Why dont you?

THE DOCTOR I do But I help them. You see, it's easier to beheve in bottles and inoculations than in oneself and in that mysterious power that gives us our life and that none of us knows anything about Lots of people beheve in the bottles and wouldnt know what you were talking about if you suggested the real thing And the bottles do the trick. My patients get well as often as not. That is, unless their number's up Then we all have to go

THE MONSTER. No girl's number is up until

she's worn out I tell you this girl could cure herself and cure me if you'd let her.

THE DOCTOR And I tell you that it would be very hard work for her. Well, why should she work hard when she can afford to pay other people to work for her? She doesn't black her own boots or scrub her own floors. She pays somebody else to do it. Why should she cure herself, which is harder work than blacking boots or scrubbing floors, when she can afford to pay the doctor to cure her? It pays her and it pays me. That's logic, my friend. And now, if you will excuse me, I shall take myself off before the old woman comes back and provokes me to wring her neck [*Rising*] Mark my words. Someday somebody will fetch her a clout over the head. Somebody who can afford to. Not the doctor. She has driven me mad already. The proof is that I hear voices and talk to them. [*He goes out*].

THE MONSTER You're saner than most of them, you fool. They think I have the keys of life and death in my pocket; but I have nothing but a horrid headache. Oh dear! oh dear!

The Monster wanders away behind the screen. The patient, left alone, begins to stir in her bed. She turns over and calls querulously for somebody to attend to her

THE PATIENT Nurse! Mother! Oh, is anyone there? [*Crying*] Selfish beasts! to leave me like this. [*She snatches angrily at the electric bell which hangs within her reach and presses the button repeatedly*]

The Elderly Lady and the night nurse come running in. The nurse is young, quick, active, resolute, and decidedly pretty. Mrs Mopply goes to the bedside table, the nurse going to the patient's left

THE ELDERLY LADY. What is it, darling? Are you awake? Was the sleeping draught no good? Are you worse? What has happened? What has become of the doctor?

THE PATIENT. I am in the most frightful agony. I have been lying here ringing for ages and ages, and no one has come to attend to me. Nobody cares whether I am alive or dead.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, how can you say such things, darling? I left the doctor here. I was away only for a minute. I had to receive the new night nurse and give her her instructions. Here she is. And oh, do cover up your arm, darling. You will get a chill, and then it will be all over. Nurse, see that she is never uncovered for a moment. Do you think it

would be well to have another hot water bottle against her arm until it is quite warm again? Do you feel it cold, darling?

THE PATIENT [*angrily*] Yes, deadly cold.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh don't say that. And there is so much pneumonia about. I wish the doctor had not gone. He could sound your lungs—

NIGHT NURSE [*feeling the patient's arm*] She is quite warm enough.

THE PATIENT [*bursting into tears*] Mother, take this hateful woman away. She wants to kill me.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh no, dear, she has been so highly recommended. I can't get a new nurse at this hour. Won't you try, for my sake, to put up with her until the day nurse comes in the morning?

THE NURSE. Come! Let me arrange your pillows and make you comfortable. You are smothered with all this bedding. Four thick blankets and an eiderdown! No wonder you feel irritable.

THE PATIENT [*screaming*] Don't touch me. Go away. You want to murder me. Nobody cares whether I am alive or dead.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, darling, don't keep on saying that. You know it's not true, and it does hurt me so.

THE NURSE. You must not mind what a sick person says, madam. You had better go to bed and leave the patient to me. You are quite worn out. [*She comes to Mrs Mopply and takes her arm coaxingly but firmly*]

THE ELDERLY LADY. I know I am: I am ready to drop. How sympathetic of you to notice it! But how can I leave her at such a moment?

THE NURSE. She ought not to have more than one person in the room at a time. You see how it excites and worries her.

THE ELDERLY LADY. Oh, that's very true. The doctor said she was to be kept as quiet as possible.

THE NURSE [*leading her to the door*] You need a good night's sleep. You may trust me to do what is right and necessary.

THE ELDERLY LADY [*whispering*] I will indeed. How kind of you! You will let me know if anything—

THE NURSE. Yes, yes. I promise to come for you and wake you if anything happens. Good night, madam.

THE ELDERLY LADY [*sotto voce*] Good night. [*She steals out*]

The nurse, left alone with her patient, pays no

attention to her, but goes to the window She opens the curtains and raises the blind, admitting a flood of moonlight She unfastens the sash and throws it right up She then makes for the door, where the electric switch is

THE PATIENT [*huddling herself up in the bed-clothes*] What are you doing? Shut that window and pull down that blind and close those curtains at once Do you want to kill me?

The nurse turns all the lights full on

THE PATIENT [*hiding her eyes*] Oh! Oh! I cant bear it turn it off

The nurse switches the lights off

THE PATIENT So inconsiderate of you!

The nurse switches the lights on again

THE PATIENT Oh, please, please Not all that light

The nurse snatches off

THE PATIENT No, no Leave me something to read by My bedside lamp is not enough, you stupid idiot

The nurse switches on again, and calmly returns to the bedside

THE PATIENT I cant imagine how anyone can be so thoughtless and clumsy when I am so ill I am suffering horribly Shut that window and switch off half those lights at once do you hear?

The nurse snatches the eiderdown and one of the pillows rudely from the bed, letting the patient down with a jerk, and arranges them comfortably in the bedside chair

THE PATIENT How dare you touch my pillow? The audacity!

The nurse sits down, takes out a leaf cut from an illustrated journal, and proceeds to study it attentively

THE PATIENT Well! How much longer are you going to sit there neglecting me? Shut that window instantly

THE NURSE [*insolently, in her commonest dialect*] Oh go to—to sleep [*she resumes her study of the document*]

THE PATIENT Dont dare address me like that I dont believe you are a properly qualified nurse

THE NURSE [*calmly*] I should think not I wouldnt take five thousand a year to be a nurse But I know how to deal with you and your like, because I was once a patient in a hospital where the women patients were a rough lot, and the nurses had to treat them accordingly I kept my eyes open there, and learnt a little of the game [*She takes a paper packet from her pocket and opens it on the bed-*

side table It contains about half a pound of kitchen salt] Do you know what that is and what it's for?

THE PATIENT Is it medicine?

THE NURSE Yes It's a cure for screaming and hysterics and tantrums When a woman starts making a row, the first thing she does is to open her mouth A nurse who knows her business just shoves a handful of this into it. Common kitchen salt No more screaming Understand?

THE PATIENT [*hardly*] No I dont [*she reaches for the bell*]

THE NURSE [*intercepting her quickly*] No you dont [*She throws the bell cord with its button away on the floor behind the bed*] Now we shant be disturbed No bell And if you open your mouth too wide, youll get the salt See?

THE PATIENT And do you think I am a poor woman in a hospital whom you can illtreat as you please? Do you know what will happen to you when my mother comes in the morning?

THE NURSE In the morning, darling, I shall be over the hills and far away

THE PATIENT And you expect me, sick as I am, to stay here alone with you!

THE NURSE We shant be alone I'm expecting a friend.

THE PATIENT A friend!

THE NURSE A gentleman friend I told him he might drop in when he saw the lights switched off twice

THE PATIENT So that was why—

THE NURSE That was why

THE PATIENT And you calmly propose to have your young man here in my room to amuse yourself all night before my face

THE NURSE You can go to sleep

THE PATIENT I shall do nothing of the sort You will have to behave yourself decently before me

THE NURSE Oh, dont worry about that He's coming on business He's my business partner, in fact not my best boy

THE PATIENT And can you not find some more suitable place for your business than in my room at night?

THE NURSE You see, you dont know the nature of the business yet It's got to be done here and at night Here he is, I think

A burglar, well dressed, wearing rubber gloves and a small white mask over his nose, clambers in He is still in his early thirties, and quite good-looking His voice is disarmingly pleasant

THE BURGLAR All right, Sweetie?

THE NURSE All right, Popsy.

The burglar closes the window softly; draws the curtains, and comes past the nurse to the bedside.

THE BURGLAR Damn it, she's awake. Didn't you give her a sleeping draught?

THE PATIENT. Do you expect me to sleep with you in the room? Who are you? and what are you wearing that mask for?

THE BURGLAR. Only so that you will not recognize me if we should happen to meet again.

THE PATIENT. I have no intention of meeting you again. So you may just as well take it off.

THE NURSE I haven't broken to her what we are here for, Popsy.

THE PATIENT I neither know nor care what you are here for. All I can tell you is that if you don't leave the room at once and send my mother to me, I will give you both measles.

THE BURGLAR. We have both had them, dear invalid, I am afraid we must intrude a little longer [*To the nurse*] Have you found out where it is?

THE NURSE No I haven't had time. The dressing table's over there. Try that.

The burglar crosses to the other side of the bed, coming round by the foot of it, and is making for the dressing table when—

THE PATIENT. What do you want at my dressing table?

THE BURGLAR Obviously, your celebrated pearl necklace.

THE PATIENT [*escaping from her bed with a formidable bound and planting herself with her back to the dressing table as a bulwark for the jewel case*] Not if I know it, you shant.

THE BURGLAR [*approaching her*] You really must allow me.

THE PATIENT. Take that.

Holding on to the table edge behind her, she lifts her foot vigorously waist high, and shoots it hard into his solar plexus. He curls up on the bed with an agonized groan and rolls off on to the carpet at the other side. The nurse rushes across behind the head of the bed and tackles the patient. The patient swoops at her knees; lifts her, and sends her flying. She comes down with a thump flat on her back on the couch. The patient pants hard, sways giddily; staggers to the bed and falls on it, exhausted. The nurse, dazed by the patient's very unexpected athleticism, but not hurt, springs up.

THE NURSE Quick, Popsy tie her feet. She's

fainted.

THE BURGLAR [*utters a lamentable groan and rolls over on his face*]¹¹

THE NURSE. Be quick, will you?

THE BURGLAR [*trying to rise*] Ugh! Ugh!

THE NURSE [*running to him and shaking him*] My God, you are a fool, Popsy. Come and help me before she comes to. She's too strong for me.

THE BURGLAR. Ugh! Let me die.

THE NURSE Are you going to lie there for ever? Has she killed you?

THE BURGLAR [*rising slowly to his knees*] As nearly as doesn't matter. Oh, Sweetiest, why did you tell me that this heavyweight champion was a helpless invalid?

THE NURSE Shut up. Get the pearls.

THE BURGLAR [*rising with difficulty*] I don't seem to want any pearls. She got me just in the wind. I am sorry to have been of so little assistance; but oh, my Sweetie-Weetie, Nature never intended us to be burglars. Our first attempt has been a hopeless failure. Let us apologize and withdraw.

THE NURSE. Fathead! Don't be such a coward. [*Looking closely at the patient*] I say, Popsy. I believe she's asleep.

THE BURGLAR. Let her sleep. Wake not the lioness's wrath.

THE NURSE You maddening fool, don't you see that we can tie her feet and gag her before she wakes, and get away with the pearls. It's quite easy if we do it quick together. Come along.

THE BURGLAR Do not deceive yourself, my pet. We should have about as much chance as if we tried to take a female gorilla to the Zoo. No: I am not going to steal those jewels. Honesty is the best policy. I have another idea, and a much better one. You leave this to me [*He goes to the dressing table. She follows him*].

THE NURSE Whatever have you got into your silly head now?

THE BURGLAR You shall see [*Handling the jewel case*] One of these safes that open by a secret arrangement of letters. As they are as troublesome as an automatic telephone nobody ever locks them. Here is the necklace. By Jove! If they are all real, it must be worth about twenty thousand pounds. Gosh! here's a ring with a big blue diamond in it. Worth four thousand pounds if it's worth a penny. Sweetie, we are on velvet for the rest of our lives.

THE NURSE What good are blue diamonds to us if we dont steal them?

THE BURGLAR Wait Wait and see Go and sit down in that chair and look as like a nice gentle nurse as you can

THE NURSE But—

THE BURGLAR Do as you are told Have faith—faith in your Popsy

THE NURSE [*obeying*] Well, I give it up Youre mad

THE BURGLAR I was never saner in my life Stop How does she call people? Hasnt she an electric bell? Where is it?

THE NURSE [*picking it up*] Here I chucked it out of her reach when she was grabbing at it

THE BURGLAR Put it on the bed close to her hand

THE NURSE. Popsy youre off your chump She—

THE BURGLAR Sweetie in our firm I am the brains you are the hand. This is going to be our most glorious achievement. Obey me instantly

THE NURSE [*resignedly*] Oh, very well. [*She places the handle of the bell as desired*] I wash my hands of this job [*She sits down doggedly*]

THE BURGLAR [*coming to the bedside*] By the way, she is hardly a success as The Sleeping Beauty She has a wretched complexion, and her breath is not precisely ambrosial But if we can turn her out to grass she may put up some good looks And if her punch is anything like her kick she will be an invaluable bodyguard for us two weaklings—if I can persuade her to join us

THE NURSE Join us! What do you mean?

THE BURGLAR Shshshshsh Not too much noise we must wake her gently [*He stoops to the patient's ear and whispers*] Miss Mopply

THE PATIENT [*in a murmur of protest*] Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

THE NURSE What does she say?

THE BURGLAR She says, in effect, "You have waked me too soon I must slumber again." [*To the patient, more distinctly*] It is not your dear mother, Miss Mopply it is the burglar [*The patient springs half up, threateningly He falls on his knees and throws up his hands*] Kamerad, Miss Mopply Kamerad! I am utterly at your mercy The bell is on your bed, close to your hand look at it You have only to press the button to bring your mother and the police in upon me [*she seizes the handle of the bell*] and be a miserable invalid again for the rest of your life [*She drops the bell*

thoughtfully] Not an attractive prospect, is it? Now listen I have something to propose to you of the greatest importance something that may make another woman of you and change your entire destiny You can listen to me in perfect security at any moment you can ring your bell, or throw us out of the window if you prefer it I ask you for five minutes only

THE PATIENT [*still dangerously on guard*] Well?

THE BURGLAR [*rising*] Let me give you one more proof of my confidence [*He takes off his mask*] Look. Can you be afraid of such a face? Do I look like a burglar?

THE PATIENT [*relaxing, and even shewing signs of goodhumor*] No you look like a curate

THE BURGLAR [*a little hurt*] Oh, not a curate. I hope I look at least like a beneficed clergyman But it is very clever of you to have found me out The fact is, I am a clergyman But I must ask you to keep it a dead secret, for my father, who is an atheist, would disinherit me if he knew I was secretly ordained when I was up at Oxford.

THE PATIENT Oh, this is ridiculous I'm dreaming It must be that new sleeping draught the doctor gave me But it's delicious, because I'm dreaming that I'm perfectly well Ive never been so happy in my life Go on with the dream, Pops the nicest part of it is that I am in love with you My beautiful Pops, my own, my darling, you are a perfect film hero, only more like an English gentleman. [*She waves him a kiss*]

THE NURSE. Well I'll be da—

THE BURGLAR Shshshshsh. Break not the spell

THE PATIENT [*with a deep sigh of contentment*] Let nobody wake me I'm in heaven. [*She sinks back blissfully on her pillows*] Go on, Pops Tell me another

THE BURGLAR Splendid [*He takes a chair from beside the dressing table and seats himself comfortably at the bedside*] We are going to have an ideal night Now listen. Picture to yourself a heavenly afternoon in July a Scottish loch surrounded by mirrored mountains, and a boat—may I call it a shallop?—

THE PATIENT [*ecstatically*] A shallop! Oh, Popsy!

THE BURGLAR —with Sweetie sitting in the stern, and I stretched out at full length with my head pillowed on Sweetie's knees

THE PATIENT You can leave Sweetie out,

Pops. Her amorous emotions do not interest me.

THE BURGLAR. You misunderstand Sweetie's thoughts were far from me. She was thinking about you

THE PATIENT. Just like her impudence! How did she know about me?

THE BURGLAR. Simply enough. In her lily hand was a copy of The Lady's Pictorial. It contained an illustrated account of your jewels. Can you guess what Sweetie said to me as she gazed at the soft majesty of the mountains and bathed her soul in the beauty of the sunset?

THE PATIENT. Yes. She said "Popsy: we must pinch that necklace"

THE BURGLAR. Exactly. Word for word. But now can you guess what I said?

THE PATIENT. I suppose you said "Right you are, Sweetie" or something vulgar like that.

THE BURGLAR. Wrong. I said, "If that girl had any sense she'd steal the necklace herself"

THE PATIENT. Oh! This is getting interesting. How could I steal my own necklace?

THE BURGLAR. Sell it, and have a glorious spree with the price. See life. Live. You don't call being an invalid living, do you?

THE PATIENT. Why shouldn't I call it living? I am not dead. Of course when I am awake I am terribly delicate—

THE BURGLAR. Delicate! It's not five minutes since you knocked me out, and threw Sweetie all over the room. If you can fight like that for a string of pearls that you never have a chance of wearing, why not fight for freedom to do what you like, with your pocket full of money and all the fun in the wide world at your command? Hang it all, don't you want to be young and goodlooking and have a sweet breath and be a lawn tennis champion and enjoy everything that is to be enjoyed instead of frowsting here and being messed about by your silly mother and all the doctors that live on her folly? Have you no conscience, that you waste God's gifts so shamefully? You think you are in a state of illness. You're not. You're in a state of sin. Sell the necklace and buy your salvation with the proceeds.

THE PATIENT. You're a clergyman all right, Pops. But I don't know how to sell the necklace.

THE BURGLAR. I do. Let me sell it for you.

You will of course give us a fairly handsome commission on the transaction.

THE PATIENT. There's some catch in this. If I trust you with it how do I know that you will not keep the whole price for yourself?

THE BURGLAR. Sweetie. Miss Moppy has the makings of a good business woman in her. [To the patient] Just reflect, Mops (Let us call one another Mops and Pops for short) If I steal that necklace, I shall have to sell it as a burglar to a man who will know perfectly well that I have stolen it. I shall be lucky if I get a fiftieth of its value. But if I sell it on the square, as the agent of its lawful owner, I shall be able to get its full market value. The payment will be made to you; and I will trust you to pay me the commission. Sweetie and I will be more than satisfied with fifty per cent.

THE PATIENT. Fifty! Oh!

THE BURGLAR [firmly] I think you will admit that we deserve it for our enterprise, our risk, and the priceless boon of your emancipation from this wretched home. Is it a bargain, Mops?

THE PATIENT. It's a monstrous overcharge; but in dreamland generosity costs nothing. You shall have your fifty. Lucky for you that I'm asleep. If I wake up I shall never get loose from my people and my social position. It's all very well for you two criminals: you can do what you like. If you were ladies and gentlemen, you'd know how hard it is not to do what everybody else does.

THE BURGLAR. Pardon me, but I think you will feel more at ease with us if I inform you that we are ladies and gentlemen. My own rank—not that I would presume on it for a moment—is, if you ask Burke or Debrett, higher than your own. Your people's money was made in trade. My people have always lived by owning property or governing Crown Colonies. Sweetie would be a woman of the highest position but for the unfortunate fact that her parents, though united in the sight of Heaven, were not legally married. At least so she tells me.

THE NURSE [hotly] I tell you what is true. [To the patient] Popsy and I are as good company as ever you kept.

THE PATIENT. No, Sweetie. You are a common little devil and a liar. But you amuse me. If you were a real lady you wouldn't amuse me. You'd be afraid to be so unladylike.

THE BURGLAR. Just so. Come! confess! we

are better fun than your dear anxious mother and the curate and all the sympathizing relatives, arnt we? Of course we are

THE PATIENT I think it perfectly scandalous that you two, who ought to be in prison, are having all the fun while I, because I am respectable and a lady, might just as well be in prison

THE BURGLAR Dont you wish you could come with us?

THE PATIENT [*calmly*] I fully intend to come with you I'm going to make the most of this dream. Do you forget that I love you, Pops The world is before us You and Sweetie have had a week in the land of the mountain and the flood for seven guineas, tips included Now you shall have an eternity with your Mops in the loveliest earthly paradise we can find, for nothing

THE NURSE And where do I come in?

THE PATIENT You will be our chaperone

THE NURSE Chaperone! Well, you have a nerve, you have

THE PATIENT Listen. You will be a Countess We shall go abroad, where nobody will know the difference You shall have a splendid foreign title The Countess Valbrioni doesnt that tempt you?

THE NURSE Tempt me hell! I'll see you further first

THE BURGLAR Stop Sweetie I have another idea A regular dazzler Lets stage a kidnap

THE NURSE. What do you mean? stage a kidnap

THE BURGLAR It's quite simple. We kidnap Mops that is, we shall hide her in the mountains of Corsica or Istria or Dalmatia or Greece or in the Atlas or where you please that is out of reach of Scotland Yard We shall pretend to be brigands Her devoted mother will cough up five thousand to ransom her We shall share the ransom fifty-fifty fifty for Mops, twentyfive for you, twentyfive for me Mops you will realize not only the value of the pearls, but of yourself What a stroke of finance!

THE PATIENT [*excited*] Greece! Dalmatia! Kidnapped! Brigands! Ransomed! [*Collapsing a little*] Oh, dont tantalize me, you two fools you have forgotten the measles

The Monster suddenly reappears from behind the screen It is transfigured The bloated moribund Caliban has become a dainty Ariel

THE MONSTER [*picking up the last remark of the patient*] So have you No more measles

that scrap for the jewels cured you and cured me Ha ha! I am well, I am well, I am well [*It bounds about ecstatically, and finally perches on the pillows and gets into bed beside the patient*]

THE NURSE If you could jump out of bed to knock out Popsy and me you can jump out to dress yourself and hop it from here Wrap yourself up well we have a car waiting

THE BURGLAR It's no worse than being taken to a nursing home, Mops Strike for freedom Up with you!

They pull her out of bed

THE PATIENT But I cant dress myself without a maid

THE NURSE Have you ever tried?

THE BURGLAR We will give you five minutes If you are not ready we go without you [*he looks at his watch*]

The patient dashes at the wardrobe and tears out a fur cloak, a hat, a walking dress, a combination, a pair of stockings, black silk breeches, and shoes, all of which she flings on the floor The nurse picks up most of them, the patient snatches up the rest, the two retire behind the screen Meanwhile the burglar comes forward to the foot of the bed and comments oratorically, half auctioneer, half clergyman.

THE BURGLAR Fur cloak. Seal Old fashioned but worth forty-five guineas Hat Quiet and ladylike Tailor made frock. Combination silk and wool Real silk stockings without ladders Knickers how daringly modern! Shoes heels only two inches but no use for the mountains What a theme for a sermon! The well brought up maiden revolts against her respectable life The aspiring soul escapes from home, sweet home, which, as a wellknown author has said, is the girl's prison and the woman's workhouse The intrusive care of her anxious parents, the officious concern of the family clergyman for her salvation and of the family doctor for her health, the imposed affection of uninteresting brothers and sisters, the outrage of being called by her Christian name by distant cousins who will not keep their distance, the invasion of her privacy and independence at every turn by questions as to where she has been and what she has been doing, the whispering behind her back about her chances of marriage, the continual violation of that sacred aura which surrounds every living soul like the halo surrounding the heads of saints in religious pictures against all these devices for worrying her to death the innermost

uppermost life in her rises like milk in a boiling saucepan and cries "Down with you! away with you! henceforth my gates are open to real life, bring what it may For what sense is there in this world of hazards, disasters, elations and victories, except as a field for the adventures of the life everlasting? In vain do we disfigure our streets with scrawls of Safety First in vain do the nations clamor for Security, security, security. They who cry Safety First never cross the street: the empires which sacrifice life to security find it in the grave For me Safety Last, and Forward, Forward, always For—"

THE NURSE [*coming from behind the screen*] Dry up, Popsy she's ready.

The patient, cloaked, hatted, and shod, follows her breathless, and comes to the burglar, on his left.

THE PATIENT Here I am, Pops One kiss, and then—Lead on

THE BURGLAR Good Your complexion still leaves something to be desired, but [*kissing her*] your breath is sweet, you breathe the air of freedom.

THE MONSTER. Never mind her complexion. look at mine!

THE BURGLAR [*releasing the patient and turning to the nurse*] Did you speak?

THE NURSE No Hurry up, will you?

THE BURGLAR It must have been your mother snoring, Mops It will be long before you hear that music again Drop a tear.

THE PATIENT Not one A woman's future is not with her mother.

THE NURSE If you are going to start preaching like Popsy, the milkman will be here before we get away Remember, I have to take off this uniform and put on my walking things downstairs Popsy there may be a copper on his beat outside Spy out and see. Safety First [*she hurries out*].

THE BURGLAR Well, for just this once, safety first [*he makes for the window*]

THE PATIENT [*stopping him*] Idiot the police can't touch you if I back you up. It's I who run the risk of being caught by my mother

THE BURGLAR True You have an unexpectedly powerful mind Pray Heaven that in kidnapping you I am not biting off more than I can chew Come along [*He runs out*]

THE PATIENT He's forgotten the pearls!!! Thank Heaven he's a fool, a lovely fool! I shall be able to do as I like with him [*She rushes to the dressing table, bundles the jewels*

into their case, and carries it out].

THE MONSTER [*sitting up*] The play is now virtually over; but the characters will discuss it at great length for two acts more The exit doors are all in order Goodnight [*It draws up the bedclothes round its neck and goes to sleep*].

ACT II

A sea beach in a mountainous country Sand dunes rise to a brow which cuts off the view of the plain beyond, only the summits of the distant mountain range which bounds it being visible An army hut on the hither side, with a klaxon electric horn projecting from a board on the wall, shews that we are in a military cantonment Opposite the hut is a particolored canvas bathing pavilion with a folding stool beside the entrance As seen from the sand dunes the hut is on the right and the pavilion on the left From the neighbourhood of the hut a date palm throws a long shadow; for it is early morning.

In this shadow sits a British colonel in a deck chair, peacefully reading the weekly edition of The Times, but with a revolver in his equipment. A light cane chair for use by his visitors is at hand by the hut Though well over fifty, he is still slender, handsome, well set up, and every inch a commanding officer. His full style and title is Colonel Tallboys, V C, D S.O. He won his cross as a company-officer, and has never looked back since then

He is disturbed by a shattering series of explosions announcing the approach of a powerful and very imperfectly silenced motor bicycle from the side opposite to the huts

TALLBOYS Damn that noise!

The unseen rider dismounts and races his engine with a hideous clatter

TALLBOYS [*angrily*] Stop that motorbike, will you?

The noise stops, and the bicyclist, having hoiked his machine up on to its stand, taken off his goggles and gloves, and extracted a letter from his carrier, comes past the pavilion into the colonel's view with the letter in his hand.

He is an insignificant looking private soldier, dusty as to his clothes and a bit gritty as to his windbeaten face Otherwise there is nothing to find fault with his tunic and puttees are smart and correct, and his speech ready and rapid Yet the colonel, already irritated by the racket of the bicycle and the interruption to his newspaper, contemplates him with stern disfavor, for there is

something exasperatingly and inexplicably wrong about him. He wears a pith helmet with a pagri, and in profile this pagri suggests a shirt which he has forgotten to tuck in behind, whilst its front view as it falls on his shoulders gives him a feminine air of having ringlets and a veil which is in the last degree unsoldierly. His figure is that of a boy of seventeen, but he seems to have borrowed a long head and Wellingtonian nose and chin from somebody else for the express purpose of annoying the colonel. Fortunately for him these are offences which cannot be stated on a charge sheet and dealt with by the provo-marshal, and of this the colonel is angrily aware. The dispatch rider seems conscious of his incongruities, for, though very prompt, concise, and soldierly in his replies, he somehow suggests that there is an imprescriptible joke somewhere by an invisible smile which unhappily produces at times an impression of irony.

He salutes, hands the letter to the colonel, and stands at attention

TALLBOYS [*taking the letter*] Whats this?

THE RIDER I was sent with a letter to the headman of the native village in the mountains, sir. That is his answer, sir.

TALLBOYS I know nothing about it. Who sent you?

THE RIDER Colonel Saxby, sir.

TALLBOYS Colonel Saxby has just returned to the base, seriously ill. I have taken over from him. I am Colonel Tallboys.

THE RIDER So I understand, sir.

TALLBOYS Well, is this a personal letter to be sent on to him, or is it a dispatch?

THE RIDER Dispatch, sir. Service document, sir. You may open it.

TALLBOYS [*turning in his chair and concentrating on him with fierce sarcasm*] Thank you [*He surveys him from his instep to his nose*] What is your name?

THE RIDER Meek, sir.

TALLBOYS [*with disgust*] What!

THE RIDER Meek, sir M, double e, k.

The colonel looks at him with loathing, and tears open the letter. There is a painful silence whilst he puzzles over it.

TALLBOYS In dialect. Send the interpreter to me.

MEEK It's of no consequence, sir. It was only to impress the headman.

TALLBOYS INNdeed. Who picked you for this duty?

MEEK Sergeant, sir.

TALLBOYS He should have selected a cap-

able responsible person, with sufficient style to impress the native headman to whom Colonel Saxby's letter was addressed. How did he come to select you?

MEEK I volunteered, sir.

TALLBOYS Did you indeed? You consider yourself an impressive person, eh? You think you carry about with you the atmosphere of the British Empire, do you?

MEEK No, sir. I know the country. I can speak the dialects a little.

TALLBOYS Marvellous! And why, with all these accomplishments, are you not at least a corporal?

MEEK Not educationally qualified, sir.

TALLBOYS Illiterate! Are you not ashamed?

MEEK No, sir.

TALLBOYS Proud of it, eh?

MEEK Cant help it, sir.

TALLBOYS Where did you pick up your knowledge of the country?

MEEK I was mostly a sort of tramp before I enlisted, sir.

TALLBOYS Well, if I could get hold of the recruiting sergeant who enlisted you, I'd have his stripes off. You're a disgrace to the army.

MEEK Yessir.

TALLBOYS Go and send the interpreter to me. And dont come back with him. Keep out of my sight.

MEEK [*hesitates*] Er—

TALLBOYS [*peremptorily*] Now then! Did you hear me give you an order? Send me the interpreter.

MEEK The fact is, Colonel—

TALLBOYS [*outraged*] How dare you say Colonel and tell me that the fact is? Obey your order and hold your tongue.

MEEK Yessir. Sorry, sir. I am the interpreter.

Tallboys bounds to his feet, towers over Meek, who looks smaller than ever, and folds his arms to give emphasis to a terrible rejoinder. On the point of delivering it, he suddenly unfolds them again and sits down resignedly.

TALLBOYS [*wearily and quite gently*] Very well. If you are the interpreter you had better interpret this for me [*He proffers the letter*].

MEEK [*not accepting it*] No need, thank you, sir. The headman couldnt compose a letter, sir. I had to do it for him.

TALLBOYS How did you know what was in Colonel Saxby's letter?

MEEK I read it to him, sir.

TALLBOYS. Did he ask you to?

MEEK. Yessir.

TALLBOYS. He had no right to communicate the contents of such a letter to a private soldier. He cannot have known what he was doing. You must have represented yourself as being a responsible officer. Did you?

MEEK. It would be all the same to him, sir. He addressed me as Lord of the Western Isles.

TALLBOYS. You! You worm! If my letter was sent by the hands of an irresponsible messenger it should have contained a statement to that effect. Who drafted it?

MEEK. Quartermaster's clerk, sir.

TALLBOYS. Send him to me. Tell him to bring his note of Colonel Saxby's instructions. Do you hear? Stop making idiotic faces, and get a move on. Send me the quartermaster's clerk.

MEEK. The fact is—

TALLBOYS [*thundering*]. Again!!

MEEK. Sorry, sir. I am the quartermaster's clerk.

TALLBOYS. What! You wrote both the letter and the headman's answer?

MEEK. Yessir.

TALLBOYS. Then either you are lying now or you were lying when you said you were illiterate. Which is it?

MEEK. I don't seem to be able to pass the examination when they want to promote me. It's my nerves, sir, I suppose.

TALLBOYS. Your nerves! What business has a soldier with nerves? You mean that you are no use for fighting, and have to be put to do anything that can be done without it.

MEEK. Yessir.

TALLBOYS. Well, next time you are sent with a letter I hope the brigands will catch you and keep you.

MEEK. There are no brigands, sir.

TALLBOYS. No brigands! Did you say no brigands?

MEEK. Yessir.

TALLBOYS. You are acquainted with the Articles of War, are you not?

MEEK. I have heard them read out, sir.

TALLBOYS. Do you understand them?

MEEK. I think so, sir.

TALLBOYS. You think so! Well, do a little more thinking. You are serving on an expeditionary force sent out to suppress brigandage in this district and to rescue a British lady who is being held for ransom. You know

that You don't think it: you know it, eh?

MEEK. So they say, sir.

TALLBOYS. You know also that under the Articles of War any soldier who knowingly does when on active service any act calculated to imperil the success of his Majesty's forces or any part thereof shall be liable to suffer death. Do you understand? Death!

MEEK. Yessir. Army Act, Part One, Section Four, Number Six. I think you mean Section Five, Number Five, sir.

TALLBOYS. Do I? Perhaps you will be good enough to quote Section Five, Number Five.

MEEK. Yessir. "By word of mouth spreads reports calculated to create unnecessary alarm or despondency."

TALLBOYS. It is fortunate for you, Private Meek, that the Act says nothing about private soldiers who create despondency by their personal appearance. Had it done so your life would not be worth half an hour's purchase.

MEEK. No, sir. Am I to file the letter and the reply with a translation, sir?

TALLBOYS [*tearing the letter to pieces and throwing them away*]. Your folly has made a mockery of both. What did the headman say?

MEEK. Only that the country has very good roads now, sir. Motor coaches ply every day all the year round. The last active brigand retired fifteen years ago, and is ninety years old.

TALLBOYS. The usual tissue of lies. That headman is in league with the brigands. He takes a turn himself occasionally, I should say.

MEEK. I think not, sir. The fact is—

TALLBOYS. Did I hear you say "The fact is"?

MEEK. Sorry, sir. That old brigand was the headman himself. He is sending you a present of a sheep and six turkeys.

TALLBOYS. Send them back instantly. Take them back on your damned bicycle. Inform him that British officers are not orientals, and do not accept bribes from officials in whose districts they have to restore order.

MEEK. He won't understand, sir. He won't believe you have any authority unless you take presents. Besides, they haven't arrived yet.

TALLBOYS. Well, when his messengers arrive pack them back with their sheep and their turkeys and a note to say that my favor can be earned by honesty and diligence, but not purchased.

MEEK. They wont dare take back either the presents or the note, sir Theyll steal the sheep and turkeys and report gracious messages from you. Better keep the meat and the birds, sir they will be welcome after a long stretch of regulation food.

TALLBOYS Private Meek.

MEEK Yessir

TALLBOYS If you should be at any future time entrusted with the command of this expedition you will no doubt give effect to your own views and moral standards For the present will you be good enough to obey my orders without comment?

MEEK Yessir. Sorry, sir

As Meek salutes and turns to go, he is confronted by the nurse, who, brilliantly undressed for bathing under a variegated silk wrap, comes from the pavilion, followed by the patient in the character of a native servant All traces of the patient's illness have disappeared she is sun-burnt to the color of terra cotta, and her muscles are hard and glistening with unguent She is disguised en belle sauvage by headdress, wig, ornaments, and girdle proper to no locality on earth except perhaps the Russian ballet She carries a sun umbrella and a rug

TALLBOYS [*rising gallantly*] Ah, my dear Countess, delighted to see you How good of you to come!

THE COUNTESS [*giving him her finger tips*] How do, Colonel? Hot, isnt it? [*Her dialect is now a spirited amalgamation of the foreign accents of all the waiters she has known*]

TALLBOYS Take my chair [*He goes behind it and moves it nearer to her*]

THE COUNTESS Thanks [*She throws off her wrap, which the patient takes, and flings herself with careless elegance into the chair, calling*] Mr Meek. Mr Mee-e-e-ek!

Meek returns smartly, and touches the front of his cap

THE COUNTESS My new things from Paris have arrived at last. If you would be so very sweet as to get them to my bungalow somehow Of course I will pay anything necessary And could you get a letter of credit cashed for me I'd better have three hundred pounds to go on with

MEEK [*quite at his ease unconsciously dropping the soldier and assuming the gentleman*] How many boxes, Countess?

THE COUNTESS Six, I am afraid Will it be a lot of trouble?

MEEK It will involve a camel.

THE COUNTESS Oh, strings of camels if necessary Expense is no object And the letter of credit?

MEEK Sorry, Countess I have only two hundred on me You shall have the other hundred tomorrow [*He hands her a roll of notes, and she gives him the letter of credit*]

THE COUNTESS You are never at a loss Thanks So good of you

TALLBOYS Chut! Dismiss

Meek comes to attention, salutes, left-turns, and goes out at the double

TALLBOYS [*who has listened to this colloquy in renewed stupefaction*] Countess that was very naughty of you

THE COUNTESS What have I done?

TALLBOYS In camp you must never forget discipline We keep it in the background, but it is always there and always necessary That man is a private soldier Any sort of social relation—any hint of familiarity with him—is impossible for you

THE COUNTESS But surely I may treat him as a human being

TALLBOYS Most certainly not Your intention is natural and kindly, but if you treat a private soldier as a human being the result is disastrous to himself He presumes He takes liberties And the consequence of that is that he gets into trouble and has a very bad time of it until he is taught his proper place by appropriate disciplinary measures I must ask you to be particularly careful with this man Meek. He is only half-witted he carries all his money about with him. If you have occasion to speak to him, make him feel by your tone that the relation between you is one of a superior addressing a very distant inferior Never let him address you on his own initiative, or call you anything but "my lady " If there is anything we can do for you we shall be delighted to do it, but you must always ask me

The patient, greatly pleased with the colonel for snubbing Sweetie, deposits her rug and umbrella on the sand, and places a chair for him on the lady's right with grinning courtesy She then seats herself on the rug, and listens to them, hugging her knees and her umbrella, and trying to look as indigenous as possible

TALLBOYS Thank you. [*He sits down*]

THE COUNTESS I am so sorry But if I ask anyone else they only look helpless and say "You had better see Meek about it "

TALLBOYS No doubt they put everything

on the poor fellow because he is not quite all there Is it understood that in future you come to me, and not to Meek?

THE COUNTESS I will indeed, Colonel I am so sorry, and I thoroughly understand I am scolded and forgiven, arnt I?

TALLBOYS [*smiling graciously*] Admonished, we call it But of course it is not your fault. I have no right to scold you It is I who must ask your forgiveness.

THE COUNTESS Granted

THE PATIENT [*in waiting behind them, coughs significantly*]"

THE COUNTESS [*hastily*] A vulgar expression, Colonel, isn't it? But so simple and direct I like it

TALLBOYS. I didnt know it was vulgar It is concise.

THE COUNTESS Of course it isnt really vulgar But a little lower middle class, if you follow me

THE PATIENT [*pokes the chair with the sun umbrella*]"

THE COUNTESS [*as before*] Any news of the brigands, Colonel?

TALLBOYS, No; but Miss Mopply's mother, who is in a distracted condition—very naturally of course, poor woman!—has actually sent me the ransom She implores me to pay it and release her child She is afraid that if I make the slightest hostile demonstration the brigands will cut off the girl's fingers and send them in one by one until the ransom is paid She thinks they may even begin with her ears, and disfigure her for life Of course that is a possibility such things have been done; and the poor lady points out very justly that I cannot replace her daughter's ears by exterminating the brigands afterwards, as I shall most certainly do if they dare lay a hand on a British lady But I cannot countenance such a concession to deliberate criminality as the payment of a ransom [*The two conspirators exchange dismayed glances*] I have sent a message to the old lady by wireless to say that payment of a ransom is out of the question, but that the British Government is offering a substantial reward for information

THE COUNTESS [*jumping up excitedly*] Wotjesoy? A reward on top of the ransom?

THE PATIENT [*pokes her savagely with the umbrella*]"

TALLBOYS [*surprised*] No Instead of the ransom.

THE COUNTESS [*recollecting herself*] Of course. How silly of me! [*She sits down and adds, reflectively*] If this native girl could find out anything would she get the reward?

TALLBOYS. Certainly she would Good idea that what?

THE COUNTESS. Yes, Colonel, isn't it?

TALLBOYS By the way, Countess, I met three people yesterday who know you very well

THE PATIENT [*forgetting herself and scrambling forward to her knees*] But you—

THE COUNTESS [*stopping her with a back-handed slap on the mouth*] Silence, girl How dare you interrupt the colonel? Go back to your place and hold your tongue

The Patient obeys humbly until the Colonel delicately turns his head away, when she shakes her fist threateningly at the smiter

TALLBOYS One of them was a lady I happened to mention your brother's name; and she lit up at once and said "Dear Aubrey Bagot! I know his sister intimately. We were all three children together"

THE COUNTESS It must have been dear Florence Dorchester I hope she wont come here. I want to have an absolute holiday I dont want to see anybody—except you, Colonel.

TALLBOYS Haw! Very good of you to say so
The Burglar comes from the bathing tent, very elegant in black and white bathing costume and black silken wrap with white silk lapels. a clerical touch

TALLBOYS [*continuing*] Ah, Bagot! Ready for your dip? I was just telling the Countess that I met some friends of yours yesterday Fancy coming on them out here of all places! Shews how small the world is, after all [*Rising*] And now I am off to inspect stores There is a shortage of maroons that I dont understand.

THE COUNTESS What a pity! I love maroons. They have such nice ones at that confectioner's near the Place Vendôme

TALLBOYS. Oh, youre thinking of marrons glacés No maroons are fireworks things that go off with a bang For signalling

THE COUNTESS Oh! the things they used to have in the war to warn us of an air raid?

TALLBOYS Just so Well, au revoir

THE COUNTESS Au revoir Au revoir.

The Colonel touches his cap gallantly and bustles off past the hut to his inspection

THE PATIENT [*rising vengefully*] You dare smack me in the face again, my girl, and I'll

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

lay you out flat, even if I have to give away the whole show

THE COUNTESS Well, you keep that umbrella to yourself next time What do you suppose I'm made of? Leather?

AUBREY *[coming between them]* Now! now! now! Children! children! Whats wrong?

THE PATIENT This silly bitch—

AUBREY Oh no, no, no, Mops Damn it, be a lady Whats the matter, Sweetie?

THE COUNTESS You shouldnt talk like that, dearie A low girl might say a thing like that, but youre expected to know better

AUBREY Mops youve shocked Sweetie

THE PATIENT Well do you think she never shocks me? She's a walking earthquake And now what are we to do if these people the Countess Valbrioni

THE COUNTESS Not much there isnt Do you suppose we three are the only lars in the world? All you have to do is to give yourself a swell title, and all the snobs within fifty miles will swear that you are their dearest friend

AUBREY The first lesson a crook has to learn, darling, is that nothing succeeds like lying Make any statement that is so true that it has been staring us in the face all our lives, and the whole world will rise up and passionately contradict you If you dont withdraw and apologize, it will be the worse for you. But just tell a thundering silly he that everyone knows is a lie, and a murmur of pleased assent will hum up from every quarter of the globe If Sweetie had introduced herself as what she obviously is that is, an ex-hotel chambermaid who became a criminal on principle—me!—with whom of an ex-army chaplain—me!—with whom she fell in love deeply but transitorily, nobody would have believed her But she has no sooner made the impossible statement that she is a countess, and that the ex-chaplain is her half stepbrother the Honorable Aubrey Bagot, than clouds of witnesses spring up to assure Colonel Tallboys that it is all gospel truth So have no fear of exposure, darling, and do you, my Sweetie, and he and he until your imagination bursts

THE PATIENT *[throwing herself moodily into the deck chair]* I wonder are all crooks as fond of preaching as you are

AUBREY *[bending affectionately over her]* Not all, dearest I dont preach because I am a

crook, but because I have a gift—a divine gift—that way

THE PATIENT Where did you get it? Is your father a bishop?

AUBREY *[straightening himself up to declaim]* Have I not told you that he is an atheist, and, like all atheists, an inflexible moralist? He said I might become a preacher if I believed what I preached That, of course, was nonsense my gift of preaching is not confined to what I believe I can preach anything, true or false I am like a violin, on which you can play all sorts of music, from jazz to Mozart. *[Relaxing]* But the old man never could be brought to see it He said the proper profession for me was the bar *[He snatches up the rug, replaces it on the patient's left, and throws himself down lazily on it]*

THE COUNTESS Aint we going to bathe?

AUBREY Oh, dash it, dont lets go into the water Lets sunbathe

THE COUNTESS Lazy devil! *[She takes the folding stool from the pavilion, and sits down discontentedly]*

THE PATIENT Your father was right If you have no conscience about what you preach, your proper job is at the bar But as you have no conscience about what you do, you will probably end in the dock.

AUBREY Most likely But I am a born preacher, not a pleader. The theory of legal procedure is that if you set two lars to expose one another, the truth will emerge That would not suit me I greatly dislike being contradicted, and the only place where a man is safe from contradiction is in the pulpit. I detest argument it is unmannerly, and obscures the preacher's message Besides, the law is too much concerned with crude facts and too little with spiritual things, and it is in spiritual things that I am interested they alone call my gift into full play

THE PATIENT You call preaching things you dont believe spiritual, do you?

AUBREY Put a sock in it, Mops My gift is divine it is not limited by my petty personal convictions It is a gift of lucidity as well as of eloquence Lucidity is one of the most precious of gifts the gift of the teacher the gift of explanation I can explain anything to anybody, and I love doing it I feel I must do it if only the doctrine is beautiful and subtle and exquisitely put together I may feel instinctively that it is the rottenest non-

sense. Still, if I can get a moving dramatic effect out of it, and preach a really splendid sermon about it, my gift takes possession of me and obliges me to sail in and do it. Sweetie: go and get me a cushion for my head there's a dear.

THE PATIENT Do nothing of the kind, Sweetie. Let him wait on himself.

THE COUNTESS [*rising*] He'd only mess everything about looking for it. I like to have my rooms left tidy. [*She goes into the pavilion*]

THE PATIENT Isn't that funny, Pops? She has a conscience as a chambermaid and none as a woman.

AUBREY Very few people have more than one point of honor, Mops. And lots of them haven't even one.

THE COUNTESS [*returning with a silk cushion, which she hurls hard at Aubrey's head*] There! And now I give you both notice. I'm getting bored with this place.

AUBREY [*making himself comfortable with his cushion*] Oh, you are always getting bored.

THE PATIENT I suppose that means that you are tired of Tallboys.

THE COUNTESS [*moving restlessly about*] I am fed up with him to that degree that I sometimes feel I could almost marry him, just to put him on the list of the inevitables that I must put up with willynilly, like getting up in the morning, and washing and dressing and eating and drinking things you dare not let yourself get tired of because if you did they'd drive you mad. Let's go and have a bit of real life somewhere.

THE PATIENT Real life! I wonder where that's to be found! We've spent nearly six thousand pounds in two months looking for it. The money we got for the necklace won't last for ever.

AUBREY Sweetie, you will have to stick it in this spot until we touch that ransom, and that's all about it.

THE COUNTESS I'll do as I like, not what you tell me. And I tell you again—the two of you—you can take a week's notice. I'm bored with this business. I need a change.

AUBREY. What are we to do with her, Mops? Always change! change! change!

THE COUNTESS Well, I like to see new faces.

AUBREY I could be happy as a Buddha in a temple, eternally contemplating my own middle and having the same old priest to polish me up every day. But Sweetie wants a new

face every fortnight. I have known her fall in love with a new face twice in the same week. [*Turning to her*] Woman, have you any sense of the greatness of constancy?

THE COUNTESS I might be constant if I were a real countess. But I'm only a hotel chambermaid; and a hotel chambermaid gets so used to new faces that at last they become a necessity. [*She sits down on the stool*].

AUBREY. And the oftener the faces change the more the tips come to, eh?

THE COUNTESS. Oh, it's not that, though of course that counts. The real secret of it is that though men are awfully nice for the first few days, it doesn't last. You get the best out of men by having them always new. What I say is that a love affair should always be a honeymoon. And the only way to make sure of that is to keep changing the man, for the same man can never keep it up. In all my life I have known only one man that kept it up till he died.

THE PATIENT [*interested*] Ah! Then the thing is possible?

THE COUNTESS Yes! it was a man that married my sister. that was how I came to know about it.

AUBREY. And his ardor never palled? Day in and day out, until death did them part, he was the same as on the wedding day? Is that really true, Sweetie?

THE COUNTESS It is. But then he beat her on their wedding day; and he beat her just as hard every day afterwards. I made her get a separation order, but she went back to him because nobody else paid her any attention.

AUBREY Why didn't you tell me that before? I'd have beaten you black and blue sooner than lose you. [*Sitting up*] Would you believe it, Mops, I was in love with this woman, madly in love with her. She was not my intellectual equal; and I had to teach her table manners. But there was an extraordinary sympathy between our lower centres; and when after ten days she threw me over for another man I was restrained from murder and suicide only by the most resolute exercise of my reasoning powers, my determination to be a civilized man, and fear of the police.

THE COUNTESS Well, I gave you a good time for the ten days, didn't I? Lots of people don't get that much to look back on. Besides, you know it was for your own good, Popsy. We weren't really suited, were we?

AUBREY You had acquired an insatiable taste for commercial travellers You could sample them at the rate of three a week I could not help admiring such amazing mobility of the affections I had heard operatic tenors bawling Woman Is Fickle, but it always seemed to me that what was to be dreaded in women was their implacable constancy But you! Fickle! I should think so

THE COUNTESS Well, the travellers were just as bad, you know.

AUBREY Just as bad! Say just as good Fickleness means simply mobility, and mobility is a mark of civilization. You should pride yourself on it If you dont you will lose your self-respect, and I cannot endure a woman who has no self-respect.

THE COUNTESS Oh, whats the use of us talking about self-respect? You are a thief and so am I I go a little further than that, myself, and so would you if you were a woman. Dont you be a hypocrite, Popsy at least not with me

AUBREY At least not with you! Sweetie that touch of concern for my spiritual welfare almost convinces me that you still love me

THE COUNTESS Not me Not much I'm through with you, my lad. And I cant quite fancy the colonel he's too old, and too much the gentleman

AUBREY He's better than nobody Who else is there?

THE COUNTESS Well, there's the sergeant I daresay I have low tastes, but he's my sort, and the colonel isnt.

THE PATIENT Have you fallen in love with Sergeant Fielding, Sweetie?

THE COUNTESS Well, yes, if you like to call it that

AUBREY May I ask have you sounded him on the subject?

THE COUNTESS How can I? I'm a countess, and he's only a sergeant If I as much as let on that I'm conscious of his existence I give away the show to the colonel. I can only look at him And I cant do even that when anyone else is looking And all the time I want to hug him [*she breaks down in tears*]

AUBREY Oh for Heaven's sake dont start crying

THE PATIENT For all you know, Sweetie, the sergeant may be a happily married man.

THE COUNTESS What difference does that make to my feelings? I am so lonely The place is so dull No pictures No dances

Nothing to do but be ladylike And the one really lovable man going to waste! I'd rather be dead.

THE PATIENT. Well, it's just as bad for me

THE COUNTESS No it isnt Youre a real lady youre broken in to be dull Besides, you have Popsy And youre supposed to be our servant That gives you the run of the whole camp when youre tired of him You can pick up a private when you like Whats to prevent you?

THE PATIENT My ladylike morals, I suppose

THE COUNTESS Morals your grandmother! I thought youd left all that flapdoodle behind you when you came away with us

THE PATIENT I meant to Ive tried to But you shock me in spite of myself every second time you open your mouth

THE COUNTESS Dont you set up to be a more moral woman than I am, because youre not

THE PATIENT I dont pretend to be But I may tell you that my infatuation for Popsy, which I now see was what really nerved me to this astonishing breakaway, has been, so far, quite innocent Can you believe that, you elod?

THE COUNTESS Oh yes I can Popsy's satisfied as long as you let him talk. What I mean is—and I tell it to you straight—that with all my faults I'm content with one man at a time

THE PATIENT Do you suggest that I am carrying on with two men?

THE COUNTESS I dont suggest anything I say what I mean straight out, and if you dont like it you can lump it You may be in love with Popsy, but youre interested in Private Meek, though what you see in that dry little worm beats me

THE PATIENT Have you noticed, my Sweetie, that your big strapping splendid sergeant is completely under the thumb of that dry little worm?

THE COUNTESS He wont be when I get him under my thumb But you just be careful Take this tip from me one man at a time I am advising you for your good, because youre only a beginner, and what you think is love, and interest, and all that, is not real love at all three quarters of it is only unsatisfied curiosity Ive lived at that address myself, and I know When I love a man now it's all love and nothing else It's the real thing while it lasts I havnt the least curiosity about

my lovely sergeant. I know just what he'll say and what he'll do. I just want him to do it.

THE PATIENT [*rising, revolted*] Sweetie. I really cannot bear any more of this. No doubt it's perfectly true. It's quite right that you should say it frankly and plainly. I envy and admire the frightful coolness with which you plump it all out. Perhaps I shall get used to it in time. But at present it knocks me to pieces. I shall simply have to go away if you pursue the subject. [*She sits down in the cane chair with her back to them*]

AUBREY That's the worst of Sweetie. We all have—to put it as nicely as I can—our lower centres and our higher centres. Our lower centres act. They act with a terrible power that sometimes destroys us; but they don't talk. Speech belongs to the higher centres. In all the great poetry and literature of the world the higher centres speak. In all respectable conversation the higher centres speak, even when they are saying nothing or telling lies. But the lower centres are there all the time: a sort of guilty secret with every one of us, though they are dumb. I remember asking my tutor at college whether, if anyone's lower centres began to talk, the shock would not be worse than the one Balaam got when his donkey began talking to him. He only told me half a dozen improper stories to shew how openminded he was. I never mentioned the subject again until I met Sweetie. Sweetie is Balaam's ass.

THE COUNTESS Keep a civil tongue in your head, Popsy. I—

AUBREY [*springing to his feet*] Woman. I am paying you a compliment. Balaam's ass was wiser than Balaam. You should read your Bible. That is what makes Sweetie almost superhuman. Her lower centres speak. Since the war the lower centres have become vocal. And the effect is that of an earthquake. For they speak truths that have never been spoken before—truths that the makers of our domestic institutions have tried to ignore. And now that Sweetie goes shouting them all over the place, the institutions are rocking and splitting and sundering. They leave us no place to live, no certainties, no workable morality, no heaven, no hell, no commandments, and no God.

THE PATIENT What about the light in our own souls that you were so eloquent about the day before yesterday at lunch when you

drank a pint of champagne?

AUBREY. Most of us seem to have no souls. Or if we have them, they have nothing to hang on to. Meanwhile, Sweetie goes on shouting. [*He takes refuge in the deck chair*]

THE COUNTESS [*rising*] Oh, what are you gassing about? I am not shouting. I should be a good woman if it wasn't so dull. If you're goodnatured, you just get put upon. Who are the good women? Those that enjoy being dull and like being put upon. They've no appetites. Life's thrown away on them: they get nothing out of it.

THE PATIENT. Well, come, Sweetie! What do you get out of it?

THE COUNTESS Excitement that's what I get out of it. Look at Popsy and me! We're always planning robberies. Of course I know it's mostly imagination; but the fun is in the planning and the expectation. Even if we did them and were caught, there would be the excitement of being tried and being in all the papers. Look at poor Harry Smiler that murdered the cop in Croydon! When he came and told us what he'd done Popsy offered to go out and get him some cyanide to poison himself, for it was a dead sure thing that he'd be caught and bumped off. "What!" says Harry; "and lose the excitement of being tried for my life! I'd rather be hanged" he says; and hanged he was. And I say it must have been almost worth it. After all, he'd have died anyhow perhaps of something really painful. Harry wasn't a bad man really; but he couldn't bear dullness. He had a wonderful collection of pistols that he had begun as a boy. He picked up a lot in the war. Just for the romance of it, you know. He meant no harm. But he'd never shot anyone with them; and at last the temptation was too great and he went out and shot the cop. Just for nothing but the feeling that he'd fired the thing off and done somebody in with it. When Popsy asked him why he'd done it, all he could say was that it was a sort of fulfilment. But it gives you an idea, doesn't it, of what I mean? [*She sits down again, relieved by her outburst*].

AUBREY All it means is a low vitality. Here is a man with all the miracles of the universe to stagger his imagination and all the problems of human destiny to employ his mind, and he goes out and shoots an innocent policeman because he can think of nothing more interesting to do. Quite right to hang

him And all the people who can find nothing more exciting to do than to crowd into the court to watch him being sentenced to death should have been hanged too. You will be hanged someday, Sweetie, because you have not what people call a richly stored mind. I have tried to educate you—

THE COUNTESS. Yes you gave me books to read. But I couldn't read them; they were as dull as ditchwater. I've tried crossword puzzles to occupy my mind and keep me off planning robberies, but what crossword puzzle is half the fun and excitement of picking somebody's pocket, let alone that you can't live by it? You wanted me to take to drink to keep me quiet. But I don't like being drunk, and what would become of my good looks if I did? Ten bottles of champagne couldn't make you feel as you do when you walk past a policeman who has only to stop you and search you to put you away for three years.

THE PATIENT. Pops did you really try to set her drinking? What a thorough-paced blackguard you are!

AUBREY. She is much better company when she's half drunk. Listen to her now, when she is sober!

THE PATIENT. Sweetie are you really having such a jolly time after all? You began by threatening to give up our exciting enterprise because it is so dull.

AUBREY. She is free. There is the sergeant. And there is always the hope of something turning up and the sense of being ready for it without having to break all the shackles and throw down all the walls that imprison a respectable woman.

THE PATIENT. Well, what about me?

AUBREY [puzzled]. Well, what about you? You are free, aren't you?

THE PATIENT [rising very deliberately, and going behind him to his left hand, which she picks up and fondles as she sermonizes, seated on the arm of his chair]. My angel love, you have rescued me from respectability so completely that I have for a month past been living the life of a mountain goat. I have got rid of my anxious worrying mother as completely as a weaned kid, and I no longer hate her. My slavery to cooks stuffing me with long meals of fish, flesh, and fowl is a thing of the miserable past. I eat dates and bread and water and raw onions when I can get them; and when I can't get them I fast, with the result that I have forgotten what illness means, and

if I ran away from you two neither of you could catch me, and if you did I could fight the pair of you with one hand tied behind me. I revel in all your miracles of the universe—the delicious dawns, the lovely sunsets, the changing winds, the cloud pictures, the flowers, the animals and their ways, the birds and insects and reptiles. Every day is a day of adventure with its cold and heat, its light and darkness, its cycles of exultant vigor and exhaustion, hunger and satiety, its longings for action that change into a longing for sleep, its thoughts of heavenly things that change so suddenly into a need for food.

AUBREY. What more could any mortal desire?

THE PATIENT [seizing him by the ears]. Liar.

AUBREY. Thank you. You mean, I presume, that these things do not satisfy you—you want me as well.

THE PATIENT. You!! You!!! you selfish lazy sugary-tongued blackguard [Releasing him]. No, I included you with the animals and their ways, just as I included Sweetie and the sergeant.

THE COUNTESS. You let Sweetie and her sergeant alone—d'y'hear? I have had enough of that joke on me.

THE PATIENT [rising and taking her by the chin to turn her face up]. It is no joke, Sweetest. It is the dead solemn earnest. I called Pops a liar, Sweetie, because all this is not enough. The glories of nature don't last any decently active person a week, unless they're professional naturalists or mathematicians or a painter or something. I want something sensible to do. A beaver has a jolly time because it has to build its dam and bring up its family. I want my little job like the beaver. If I do nothing but contemplate the universe there is so much in it that is cruel and terrible and wantonly evil, and so much more that is oppressively astronomical and endless and inconceivable and impossible, that I shall just go stark raving mad and be taken back to my mother with straws in my hair. The truth is, I am free, I am healthy, I am happy, and I am utterly miserable [Turning on Aubrey]. Do you hear? Utterly miserable.

AUBREY [losing his temper]. And what do you suppose I am? Here with nothing to do but drag about two damn' silly women and talk to them.

THE COUNTESS. It's worse for them. They have to listen to you.

THE PATIENT. I despise you. I hate you.

You—you—you—yougentleman thief What right has a thief to be a gentleman? Sweetie is bad enough, heaven knows, with her vulgarity and her low cunning always trying to get the better of somebody or to get hold of a man; but at least she's a woman; and she's real Men are not real theyre all talk, talk, talk—

THE COUNTESS [*half rising*] You keep a civil tongue in your head. do you hear?

THE PATIENT. Another syllable of your cheek, Sweetie; and I'll give you a hiding that will keep you screaming for half an hour [*Sweetie subsides*] I want to beat somebody I want to kill somebody I shall end by killing the two of you What are we, we three glorious adventurers? Just three inefficient fertilizers

AUBREY. What on earth do you mean by that?

THE PATIENT Yes inefficient fertilizers. We do nothing but convert good food into bad manure. We are walking factories of bad manure thats what we are.

THE COUNTESS [*rising*] Well, I am not going to sit here and listen to that sort of talk. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

AUBREY [*rising also, shocked*] Miss Mopply there are certain disgusting truths that no lady would throw in the teeth of her fellow creatures—

THE PATIENT. I am not a lady: I am free now to say what I please How do you like it?

THE COUNTESS [*relenting*] Look here, dearie You mustnt go off at the deep end like this You— [*The patient turns fiercely on her she screams*] Ah-a-a-ah! Popsy she's mad Save me [*She runs away, out past the pavilion*]

AUBREY. What is the matter with you? Are you out of your senses? [*He tries to hold her, but she sends him sprawling*]

THE PATIENT No. I am exercising my freedom. The freedom you preached The freedom you made possible for me You dont like to hear Sweetie's lower centres shouting Well, now you hear my higher centres shouting You dont seem to like it any better.

AUBREY. Mops youre hysterical. You felt splendid an hour ago; and you will feel splendid again an hour from now. You will always feel splendid if you keep yourself fit

THE PATIENT. Fit for what? A lost dog feels fit thats what makes him stray; but he's the unhappiest thing alive. I am a lost dog a tramp, a vagabond. Ive got nothing to do

Ive got nowhere to go. Sweetie's miserable and youre miserable, and I'm miserable, and I shall just kick you and beat you to a jelly.

She rushes at him He dodges her and runs off past the hut At that moment Tallboys returns with Meek past the other side of the hut; and the patient, unable to check herself, crashes into his arms.

TALLBOYS [*sternly*] Whats this? What are you doing here? Why are you making this noise? Dont clench your fists in my presence [*She droops obsequiously*]. Whats the matter?

THE PATIENT [*salaaming and chanting*] Bmal elttal a dah yram, Tuan.

TALLBOYS Can you speak English?

THE PATIENT No Engliss.

TALLBOYS Or French?

THE PATIENT. No Frennss, Tuan Wons sa etihw saw eceelf sti

TALLBOYS. Very well. dont do it again. Now off with you.

She goes out backward into the pavilion, salaaming Tallboys sits down in the deck chair.

TALLBOYS [*to Meek*] Here, you. You say youre the interpreter Did you understand what that girl said to me?

MEEK. Yessir

TALLBOYS What dialect was it? It didnt sound like what the natives speak here.

MEEK No sir I used to speak it at school. English back slang, sir.

TALLBOYS. Back slang? What do you mean?

MEEK English spelt backwards She reversed the order of the words too, sir That shews that she has those two little speeches off by heart

TALLBOYS But how could a native girl do such a thing? I couldnt do it myself.

MEEK That shews that she's not a native girl, sir

TALLBOYS But this must be looked into Were you able to pick up what she said?

MEEK Only bmal elttal, sir. That was quite easy. It put me on to the rest.

TALLBOYS But what does bmal elttal mean?

MEEK. Little lamb, sir.

TALLBOYS She called me a little lamb!

MEEK No sir All she said was "Mary had a little lamb." And when you asked her could she speak French she said, of course, "Its fleece was white as snow"

TALLBOYS But that was insolence.

MEEK. It got her out of her difficulty, sir

TALLBOYS This is very serious. The woman

is passing herself off on the Countess as a native servant.

MEEK Do you think so, sir?

TALLBOYS I dont think so I know so Dont be a fool, man Pull yourself together, and dont make silly answers

MEEK Yessir No sir

TALLBOYS [*angrily bawling at him*] "Ba Ba black sheep have you any wool? Yes sir, no sir, three bags full" Dont say yessir no sir to me

MEEK No sir

TALLBOYS Go and fetch that girl back. Not a word to her about my finding her out, mind. When I have finished with her you will explain to me about those maroons

MEEK Yessir [*He goes into the pavilion*]

TALLBOYS Hurry up [*He settles himself comfortably and takes out his cigaret case*]

The Countess peers round the corner of the pavilion to see whether she may safely return Aubrey makes a similar reconnaissance round the corner of the hut

THE COUNTESS Here I am again, you see [*She smiles fascinatingly at the Colonel and sits down on her stool*]

AUBREY Moi aussi May I— [*he stretches himself on the rug*]

TALLBOYS [*sitting up and putting the cigaret case back in his pocket*] Just in the nick of time I was about to send for you I have made a very grave discovery That native servant of yours is not a native Her lingo is a ridiculous fraud She is an Englishwoman

AUBREY You dont say so!

THE COUNTESS Oh, impossible

TALLBOYS Not a doubt of it She's a fraud take care of your jewels Or else—and this is what I suspect—she's a spy

AUBREY A spy! But we are not at war

TALLBOYS The League of Nations has spies everywhere [*To the Countess*] You must allow me to search her luggage at once, before she knows that I have found her out.

THE COUNTESS But I have missed nothing I am sure she hasnt stolen anything What do you want to search her luggage for?

TALLBOYS For maroons

THE COUNTESS } [*together*] { Maroons!

AUBREY } { Maroons!

TALLBOYS Yes, maroons I inspected the stores this morning, and the maroons are missing I particularly wanted them to recall me at lunch time when I go sketching I am rather a dab at watercolors And there is not

a single maroon left There should be fifteen

AUBREY Oh, I can clear that up It's on of your men Meek. He goes about on motor bicycle with a sack full of maroons and a lot of wire He said he was surveying He was evidently very anxious to get rid of me so I did not press my inquiries But the accounts for the maroons

TALLBOYS Not at all This is very serious Meek is a half witted creature who should never have been enlisted. He is like a chuk this woman could do anything she please with him

THE COUNTESS But what could she possibly want with maroons?

TALLBOYS I dont know This expedition has been sent out without the sanction of the League of Nations We always forget to consult it when there is anything serious in hand The woman may be an emissary of the League She may be working against us

THE COUNTESS But even so, what harm can she do us?

TALLBOYS [*tapping his revolver*] My dear lady, do you suppose I am carrying this for fun? Dont you realize that the hills here are full of hostile tribes who may try to raid us at any moment? Look at that electric horn there. If it starts honking, look out, for it will mean that a body of tribesmen has been spotted advancing on us

THE COUNTESS [*alarmed*] If I'd known that you wouldnt have got me here Is that so Popsy?

AUBREY Well, yes, but it doesnt matter theyre afraid of us

TALLBOYS Yes, because they dont know that we are a mere handful of men But this woman is in communication with them and has got hold of that idiot Meek, we may have them down on us like a swarm of hornets I dont like this at all I must get to the bottom of it at once Ah! here she comes

Meek appears at the entrance to the pavilion He stands politely aside to let the patient pass him, and remains there

MEEK The colonel would like a word with you, Miss

AUBREY Go easy with her, Colonel She can run like a deer And she has muscles of iron You had better turn out the guard before you tackle her

TALLBOYS Pooh! Here, you!

The patient comes to him past the Countess with an air of disarming innocence, falls on her

knees, lifts her palms, and smites the ground with her forehead

TALLBOYS They tell me you can run fast. Well, a bullet can run faster [*He taps his revolver*] Do you understand that?

THE PATIENT [*salaaming*] Bmal elttil a dah yram wons sa etihw saw eceelf sti—

TALLBOYS [*tonitruant*] And everywhere that Mary went—

THE PATIENT [*adroitly cutting in*] That lamb was sure to go Got me, Colonel How clever of you! Well, what of it?

TALLBOYS. That is what I intend to find out You are not a native

THE PATIENT Yes, of Somerset.

TALLBOYS Precisely. Well, why are you disguised? Why did you try to make me believe that you dont understand English?

THE PATIENT For a lark, Colonel.

TALLBOYS Thats not good enough Why have you passed yourself off on this lady as a native servant? Being a servant is no lark Answer me Dont stand there trying to invent a lie Why did you pretend to be a servant?

THE PATIENT One has so much more control of the house as a servant than as a mistress nowadays, Colonel

TALLBOYS. Very smart, that You will tell me next that one controls a regiment much more effectively as a private than as a colonel, eh?

The klaxon sounds stridently The Colonel draws his revolver and makes a dash for the top of the sandhill, but is outraced by Meek, who gets there first and takes the word of command with irresistible authority, leaving him stupent Aubrey, who has scrambled to his feet, moves towards the sand dunes to see what is happening Sweetie clutches the patient's arm in terror and drags her towards the pavilion She is fiercely shaken off, and Mops stands herground defiantly and runs towards the sound of the guns when they begin.

MEEK Stand to Charge your magazines Stand by the maroons How many do you make them, sergeant? How far off?

SERGEANT FIELDING [*invisible*] Forty horse. Nine hundred yards, about, I make it.

MEEK Rifles at the ready Cut-offs open Sights up to eighteen hundred, right over their heads no hitting Ten rounds rapid. fire [*Fusillade of rifles*] How is that?

SERGEANT'S VOICE Theyre coming on, sir.

MEEK Number one maroons. ready. Con-

tact [*Formidable explosions on the right*]. How is that?

SERGEANT'S VOICE Theyve stopped

MEEK Number two maroons ready Contact [*Explosions on the left*]. How is that?

SERGEANT'S VOICE Bolted, sir, every man of them

Meek returns from the hill in the character of an insignificant private, followed by Aubrey, to the Colonel's left and right respectively.

MEEK. Thats all right, sir Excuse interruption

TALLBOYS. Oh! You call this an interruption?

MEEK Yessir theres nothing in it to trouble you about Shall I draw up the report, sir? Important engagement. enemy routed no British casualties D S O. for you, perhaps, sir

TALLBOYS Private Meek. may I ask—if you will pardon my presumption—who is in command of this expedition, you or I?

MEEK You, sir

TALLBOYS [*repouching the revolver*] You flatter me. Thank you May I ask, further, who the devil gave you leave to plant the entire regimental stock of maroons all over the hills and explode them in the face of the enemy?

MEEK It was the duty of the intelligence orderly, sir. I'm the intelligence orderly. I had to make the enemy believe that the hills are bristling with British cannon They think that now, sir. No more trouble from them

TALLBOYS Indeed! Quartermaster's clerk, interpreter, intelligence orderly Any further rank of which I have not been informed?

MEEK. No sir

TALLBOYS Quite sure youre not a field-marshal, eh?

MEEK Quite sure, sir I never was anything higher than a colonel

TALLBOYS You a colonel? What do you mean?

MEEK Not a real colonel, sir Mostly a brevet, sir, to save appearances when I had to take command

TALLBOYS. And how do you come to be a private now?

MEEK I prefer the ranks, sir I have a freer hand And the conversation in the officers' mess doesnt suit me I always resign a commission and enlist again

TALLBOYS Always! How many commissions have you held?

MEEK I dont quite remember, sir Three, I think.

TALLBOYS Well, I am dashed!

THE PATIENT Oh, Colonel! And you mistook this great military genius for a half wit!!

TALLBOYS [*with aplomb*] Naturally The symptoms are precisely the same [*To Meek*] Dismiss

Meek salutes and trots smartly out past the hut

AUBREY By Jove!!

THE COUNTESS Well I ne— [*Correcting herself*] Tiens, tiens, tiens, tiens!

THE PATIENT What are you going to do about him, Colonel?

TALLBOYS Madam the secret of command, in the army and elsewhere, is never to waste a moment doing anything that can be delegated to a subordinate I have a passion for sketching in watercolors Hitherto the work of commanding my regiment has interfered very seriously with its gratification Henceforth I shall devote myself almost entirely to sketching, and leave the command of the expedition to Private Meek And since you all seem to be on more intimate terms with him than I can claim, will you be good enough to convey to him—casually, you understand—that I already possess the D S O and that what I am out for at present is a K C B Or rather, to be strictly accurate, that is what my wife is out for For myself, my sole concern for the moment is whether I should paint that sky with Prussian blue or with cobalt

THE COUNTESS Fancy you wasting your time on painting pictures!

TALLBOYS Countess I paint pictures to make me feel sane Dealing with men and women makes me feel mad Humanity always fails me Nature never

ACT III

A narrow gap leading down to the beach through masses of soft brown sandstone, pitted with natural grottoes Sand and big stones in the foreground Two of the grottoes are accessible from the beach by mounting from the stones, which make rough platforms in front of them The soldiers have amused themselves by hewing them into a rude architecture and giving them fancy names The one on your right as you descend the rough path through the gap is taller

than it is broad, and has a natural pillar and a stone like an altar in it, giving a Gothic suggestion which has been assisted by knocking the top of the opening into something like a pointed arch, and surmounting it with the inscription SN PAULS The grotto to the left is much wider It contains a bench long enough to accommodate two persons, its recesses are illuminated rosily by bulbs wrapped in pink paper, and some scholarly soldier has carved above it in Greek characters the word Αγαπερις, beneath which is written in red chalk THE ABODE OF LOVE, under which again some rascal has added in white chalk, NO NEED TO WASTE THE ELECTRIC LIGHT

For the moment The Abode of Love has been taken possession of by the sergeant, a wellbuilt handsome man, getting on for forty He is sitting on the bench, and is completely absorbed in two books, comparing them with rapt attention

St Pauls is also occupied A very tall gaunt elder, by his dress and bearing a well-to-do English gentleman, sits on a stone at the altar, resting his elbows on it with his chin in his hands He is in the deepest mourning, and his attitude is one of hopeless dejection

Sweetie, now fully and brilliantly dressed, comes slowly down the path through the gap, moody and bored On the beach she finds nothing to interest her until the sergeant unconsciously attracts her notice by finding some remarkable confirmation or contradiction between his two books, and smiting one of them appreciatively with his fist She instantly brightens up, climbs to the mouth of the grotto eagerly, and posts herself beside him, on his right But he is so rapt in his books that she waits in vain to be noticed

SWEETIE [*contemplating him ardently*] Ahem!

The Sergeant looks up Seeing who it is, he springs to his feet and stands to attention

SWEETIE [*giving herself no airs*] You neednt stand up for me, you know

THE SERGEANT [*stiffly*] Beg pardon, your ladyship I was not aware of your ladyship's presence

SWEETIE Can all that stuff, Sergeant [*She sits on the bench on his right*] Dont lets waste time This place is as dull for me as it is for you Dont you think we two could amuse ourselves a bit if we were friends?

THE SERGEANT [*with stern contempt*] No, my lady, I dont. I saw a lot of that in the war pretty ladies brightening up the hospitals and losing their silly heads, let alone upsetting the men, and I dont hold with it

Keep to your class. I'll keep to mine.

SWEETIE My class! Garn! I'm no countess, and I'm fed up with pretending to be one. Didnt you guess?

THE SERGEANT [*resuming his seat and treating her as one of his own class*] Why should I trouble to start guessing about you? Any girl can be a countess nowadays if she's good-looking enough to pick up a count.

SWEETIE Oh! You think I'm goodlooking, do you?

THE SERGEANT Come! If youre not a countess what are you? Whats the game, eh?

SWEETIE The game, darling, is that youre my fancy. I love you.

THE SERGEANT. Whats that to me? A man of my figure can have his pick.

SWEETIE Not here, dear. Theres only one other white woman within fifty miles; and she's a real lady. She wouldnt look at you.

THE SERGEANT Well, thats a point. Thats a point, certainly.

SWEETIE [*snuggling to him*] Yes, isnt it?

THE SERGEANT [*suffering the advance but not responding*] This climate plays the devil with a man, no matter how serious minded he is.

SWEETIE [*slipping her arm through his*] Well, isnt it natural? Whats the use of pretending?

THE SERGEANT Still, I'm not a man to treat a woman as a mere necessity. Many soldiers do. to them a woman is no more than a jar of marmalade, to be consumed and put away. I dont take that view. I admit that there is that side to it, and that for people incapable of anything better—mere animals as you might say—thats the beginning and the end of it. But to me thats only the smallest part of it. I like getting a woman's opinions. I like to explore her mind as well as her body. See these two little books. I was deep in when you accosted me? I carry them with me wherever I go. I put the problems they raise for me to every woman I meet.

SWEETIE [*with growing misgiving*] What are they?

THE SERGEANT [*pointing to them successively*] The Bible. The Pilgrim's Progress from this world to that which is to come.

SWEETIE [*dismayed, trying to rise*] Oh, my God!

THE SERGEANT [*holding her ruthlessly in the crook of his elbow*] No you dont. Sit quiet; and dont take the name of the Lord your God in vain. If you believe in him, it's blasphemy if you dont, it's nonsense. You must learn to exer-

cise your mind: what is a woman without an active mind to a man but a mere convenience?

SWEETIE I have plenty to exercise my mind looking after my own affairs. What I look to you for, my lad, is a bit of fun.

THE SERGEANT Quite. But when men and women pick one another up just for a bit of fun, they find theyve picked up more than they bargained for, because men and women have a top storey as well as a ground floor; and you cant have the one without the other. Theyre always trying to, but it doesnt work. Youve picked up my mind as well as my body; and youve got to explore it. You thought you could have a face and a figure like mine with the limitations of a gorilla. Youre finding out your mistake: thats all.

SWEETIE Oh, let me go; I have had enough of this. If I'd thought you were religious I'd have given you a wide berth, I tell you. Let me go, will you?

THE SERGEANT. Wait a bit. Nature may be using me as a sort of bait to draw you to take an interest in things of the mind. Nature may be using your pleasant animal warmth to stimulate my mind. I want your advice. I dont say I'll take it, but it may suggest something to me. You see, I'm in a mess.

SWEETIE Well, of course. Youre in the sergeants' mess.

THE SERGEANT Thats not the mess I mean. My mind's in a mess—a muddle. I used to be a religious man, but I'm not so clear about it as I was.

SWEETIE Thank goodness for that, anyhow.

THE SERGEANT Look at these two books. I used to believe every word of them because they seemed to have nothing to do with real life. But war brought those old stories home quite real, and then one starts asking questions. Look at this bit here [*he points to a page of The Pilgrim's Progress*]. It's on the very first page of it. "I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin, except some way of escape can be found whereby we may be delivered." Well, London and Paris and Berlin and Rome and the rest of them will be burned with fire from heaven all right in the next war: thats certain. Theyre all Cities of Destruction. And our Government chaps are running about with a great burden of corpses and debts on their backs,

crying "What must we do to be saved?" There it is not a story in a book as it used to be, but God's truth in the real actual world And all the comfort they get is "Flee from the wrath to come" But where are they to flee to? There they are, meeting at Geneva or hobnobbing at Chequers over the weekend, asking one another, like the man in the book, "Whither must we flee?" And nobody can tell them The man in the book says "Do you see yonder shining light?" Well, today the place is blazing with shining lights shining lights in parliament, in the papers, in the churches, and in the books that they call Outlines—Outlines of History and Science and what not—and in spite of all their ballyhoo here we are waiting in the City of Destruction like so many sheep for the wrath to come This uneducated tinker tells me the way is straight before us and so narrow that we cant miss it But he starts by calling the place the wilderness of this world Well, theres no road in a wilderness you have to make one All the straight roads are made by soldiers, and the soldiers didnt get to heaven along them A lot of them landed up in the other place No, John you could tell a story well, and they say you were a soldier, but soldiers that try to make storytelling do for service end in the clunk, and thats where they put you Twelve years in Bedford Gaol, he got He used to read the Bible in gaol, and—

SWEETIE Well, what else was there to read there? It's all they give you in some gaols

THE SERGEANT How do you know that?

SWEETIE Never you mind how I know it It's nothing to do with you

THE SERGEANT Nothing to do with me! You dont know me, my lass Some men would just order you off, but to me the most interesting thing in the world is the experience of a woman thats been shut up in a cell for years at a time with nothing but a Bible to read

SWEETIE Years! What are you talking about? The longest I ever did was nine months, and if anyone says I ever did a day longer she's a liar

THE SERGEANT [*laying his hand on the bible*] You could read that book from cover to cover in nine months

SWEETIE Some of it would drive you melancholy mad It only got me into trouble it did The chaplain asked me what I was in for Spoiling the Egyptians, I says, and heres chapter and verse for it He went and re-

ported me, the swine, and I lost seven days remission for it

THE SERGEANT Serve you right! I dont hold with spoiling the Egyptians Before the war, spoiling the Egyptians was something holy Now I see plainly it's nothing but thieving

SWEETIE [*shocked*] Oh, you shouldnt say that But what I say is, if Moses might do it why maynt I?

THE SERGEANT If thats the effect it had on your mind, it's a bad effect Some of this scripture is all right Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God That appeals to a man if only it could be set out in plain army regulations But all this thieving, and slaughtering your enemies without giving quarter, and offering up human sacrifices, and thinking you can do what you like to other people because youre the chosen people of God, and you are in the right and everyone else is in the wrong how does that look when you have had four years of the real thing instead of merely reading about it No damn it, we're civilized men, and though it may have gone down with those old Jews it isnt religion And, if it isnt, where are we? Thats what I want to know

SWEETIE And is this all you care about? Sitting here and thinking of things like that?

THE SERGEANT Well, somebody must think about them, or whats going to become of us all? The officers wont think about them The colonel goes out sketching the lootnants go out and kill the birds and animals, or play polo They wont flee from the wrath to come, not they When they wont do their military duties I have to do them It's the same with our religious duties It's the chaplain's job, not mine, but when you get a real religious chaplain you find he doesnt believe any of the old stuff, and if you get a gentleman, all he cares about is to shew you that he's a real sport and not a mealy mouthed parson So I have to puzzle it out for myself

SWEETIE Well, God help the woman that marries you thats all I have to say to you I dont call you a man [*She rises quickly to escape from him*]

THE SERGEANT [*also rising, and seizing her in a very hearty embrace*] Not a man, eh? [*He kisses her*] How does that feel, Judy?

SWEETIE [*struggling, but not very resolutely*] You let me go, will you I dont want you now

THE SERGEANT You will if I kiss you half a dozen times, more than you ever wanted any-

thing in your life before. Thats a hard fact of human nature, and its one of the facts that religion has to make room for.

SWEETIE Oh, well, kiss me and have done with it. You cant kiss and talk about religion at the same time.

THE ELDER [*springing from his cell to the platform in front of it*] Forbear this fooling, both of you. You, sir, are not an ignorant man you know that the universe is wrecked

SWEETIE [*clinging to the sergeant*] He's mad

THE ELDER I am sane in a world of lunatics

THE SERGEANT [*putting Sweetie away*] It's a queer thing, isnt it, that though there is a point at which I'd rather kiss a woman than do anything else in the world, yet I'd rather be shot than let anyone see me doing it?

THE ELDER Sir women are not, as they suppose, more interesting than the universe. When the universe is crumbling let women be silent, and let men rise to something nobler than kissing them.

The Sergeant, interested and overawed, sits down quietly and makes Sweetie sit beside him as before. The Elder continues to declaim with fanatical intensity.

THE ELDER Yes, sir the universe of Isaac Newton, which has been an impregnable citadel of modern civilization for three hundred years, has crumbled like the walls of Jericho before the criticism of Einstein. Newton's universe was the stronghold of rational Determinism. the stars in their orbits obeyed immutably fixed laws, and when we turned from surveying their vastness to study the infinite littleness of the atoms, there too we found the electrons in their orbits obeying the same universal laws. Every moment of time dictated and determined the following moment, and was itself dictated and determined by the moment that came before it. Everything was calculable everything happened because it must the commandments were erased from the tables of the law, and in their place came the cosmic algebra the equations of the mathematicians. Here was my faith. here I found my dogma of infallibility. I, who scorned alike the Catholic with his vain dream of responsible Free Will, and the Protestant with his pretence of private judgment. And now—now—what is left of it? The orbit of the electron obeys no law it chooses one path and rejects another it is as capricious as the planet Mercury, who wanders from his road to warm his

hands at the sun. All is caprice the calculable world has become incalculable. Purpose and Design, the pretexts for all the vilest superstitions, have risen from the dead to cast down the mighty from their seats and put paper crowns on presumptuous fools. Formerly, when differences with my wife, or business worries, tried me too hard, I sought consolation and reassurance in our natural history museums, where I could forget all common cares in wondering at the diversity of forms and colors in the birds and fishes and animals, all produced without the agency of any designer by the operation of Natural Selection. Today I dare not enter an aquarium, because I can see nothing in those grotesque monsters of the deep but the caricatures of some freakish demon artist. some Zeus-Mephistopheles with pantbox and plasticine, trying to surpass himself in the production of fantastic and laughable creatures to people a Noah's ark for his baby. I have to rush from the building lest I go mad, crying, like the man in your book, "What must I do to be saved?" Nothing can save us from a perpetual headlong fall into a bottomless abyss but a solid footing of dogma; and we no sooner agree to that than we find that the only trustworthy dogma is that there is no dogma. As I stand here I am falling into that abyss, down, down, down. We are all falling into it; and our dizzy brains can utter nothing but madness. My wife has died cursing me. I do not know how to live without her. we were unhappy together for forty years. My son, whom I brought up to be an incorruptible Godfearing atheist, has become a thief and a scoundrel; and I can say nothing to him but "Go, boy perish in your villainy; for neither your father nor anyone else can now give you a good reason for being a man of honor."

He turns from them and is rushing distractedly away when Aubrey, in white tropicals, comes strolling along the beach from the St Pauls side, and hails him nonchalantly.

AUBREY Hullo, father, is it really you? I thought I heard the old trombone. I couldn't mistake it. How the dickens did you turn up here?

THE ELDER [*to the sergeant*] This is my prodigal son.

AUBREY. I am not a prodigal son. The prodigal son was a spendthrift and neer-do-weel who was reduced to eating the husks that the

swine did eat I am not ruined I am rolling in money I have never owed a farthing to any man I am a model son, but I regret to say that you are very far from being a model father

THE ELDER What right have you to say that, sir? In what way have I fallen short?

AUBREY You tried to thwart my manifest destiny Nature meant me for the Church I had to get ordained secretly

THE ELDER Ordained! You dared to get ordained without my knowledge!

AUBREY Of course You objected How could I have done it with your knowledge? You would have stopped my allowance

THE ELDER [*sitting down on the nearest stone, overwhelmed*] My son a clergyman! This will kill me

AUBREY [*coolly taking another stone, on his father's right*] Not a bit of it fathers are not so easily killed It was at the university that I became what was then called a sky pilot. When the war took me it seemed natural that I should pursue that avocation as a member of the air force As a flying ace I won a very poorly designed silver medal for committing atrocities which were irreconcilable with the profession of a Christian clergyman. When I was wounded and lost my nerve for flying, I became an army chaplain I then found myself obliged to tell mortally wounded men that they were dying in a state of grace and were going straight to heaven when as a matter of fact they were dying in mortal sin and going elsewhere To expiate this blasphemy I kept as much under fire as possible, but my nerve failed again I had to take three months leave and go into a nursing home In that home I met my doom

THE ELDER What do you mean by your doom? You are alive and well, to my sorrow and shame

AUBREY To be precise, I met Sweetie That's Sweetie

SWEETIE Very pleased to meet Popsy's father, I'm sure

THE ELDER My son was called Popsy in his infancy, I put a stop to it, on principle, when he entered on his sixth year It is strange to hear the name from your lips after so long an interval

SWEETIE I always ask a man what his mother called him, and call him that It takes the starch out of him, somehow

AUBREY [*resuming his narrative*] Sweetie was

quite the rottenest nurse that ever raised the mortality of a hospital by ten per cent. But—
SWEETIE Oh, what a lie! It was the other nurses that killed the men waking them up at six in the morning and washing them! Half of them died of chills

AUBREY Well, you will not deny that you were the prettiest woman in the place

SWEETIE You thought so, anyhow

THE ELDER Oh, cease—cease this trifling I cannot endure this unending sex appeal

AUBREY During the war it was found that sex appeal was as necessary for wounded or shellshocked soldiers as skilled nursing, so pretty girls were allowed to pose as nurses because they could sit about on beds and prevent the men from going mad Sweetie did not prevent me going mad on the contrary, she drove me mad. I saw in Sweetie not only every charm, but every virtue And she returned my love When I left that nursing home, she left it too I was discharged as cured on the third of the month she had been kicked out on the first. The trained staff could stand a good deal, but they could not stand Sweetie

SWEETIE They were jealous, and you know it.

AUBREY I daresay they were Anyhow, Sweetie and I took the same lodgings, and she was faithful to me for ten days It was a record for her

SWEETIE Popsy are you going to give the whole show away, or only part of it? The Countess Valbrioni would like to know

AUBREY We may as well be frank up to the point at which we should lose money by it. But perhaps I am boring the company

THE ELDER Complete your confession, sir You have just said that you and this lady took the same lodging Am I to understand that you are husband and wife

SWEETIE We might have been if we could have depended on you for a good time But how could I marry an army chaplain with nothing but his pay and an atheist for his father?

AUBREY So that was the calculation, Sweetie, was it? I never dreamt that the idea of marriage had occurred to either of us It certainly never occurred to me I went to live with you quite simply because I felt I could not live without you The improbability of that statement is the measure of my infatuation

SWEETIE Dont you be so spiteful Did I give you a good time or did I not?

AUBREY Heavenly That also seems improbable, but it is gospel truth

THE ELDER Wretched boy do not dare to trifle with me You said just now that you owe no man anything, and that you are rolling in money Where did you get that money?

AUBREY I stole a very valuable pearl necklace and restored it to the owner She rewarded me munificently Hence my present opulence Honesty is the best policy—sometimes

THE ELDER Worse even than a clergyman! A thief!

AUBREY Why make such a fuss about nothing?

THE ELDER Do you call the theft of a pearl necklace nothing?

AUBREY. Less than nothing, compared to the things I have done with your approval. I was hardly more than a boy when I first dropped a bomb on a sleeping village I cried all night after doing that Later on I swooped into a street and sent machine gun bullets into a crowd of civilians: women, children, and all. I was past crying by that time And now you preach to me about stealing a pearl necklace! Doesnt that seem a little ridiculous?

THE SERGEANT That was war, sir.

AUBREY It was me, sergeant ME You cannot divide my conscience into a war department and a peace department Do you suppose that a man who will commit murder for political ends will hesitate to commit theft for personal ends? Do you suppose you can make a man the mortal enemy of sixty millions of his fellow creatures without making him a little less scrupulous about his next door neighbor?

THE ELDER I did not approve Had I been of military age I should have been a conscientious objector

AUBREY Oh, you were a conscientious objector to everything, even to God But my mother was an enthusiast for everything. that was why you never could get on with her. She would have shoved me into the war if I had needed any shoving She shoved my brother into it, though he did not believe a word of all the lies we were stuffed with, and didnt want to go He was killed, and when it came out afterwards that he was right, and that we were all a parcel of fools killing one another for nothing, she lost the courage to

face life, and died of it.

THE SERGEANT Well, sir, I'd never let a son of mine talk to me like that Let him have a bit of your Determinism, sir

THE FATHER [*rising impulsively*] Determinism is gone, shattered, buried with a thousand dead religions, evaporated with the clouds of a million forgotten winters The science I pinned my faith to is bankrupt its tales were more foolish than all the miracles of the priests, its cruelties more horrible than all the atrocities of the Inquisition Its spread of enlightenment has been a spread of cancer: its counsels that were to have established the millennium have led straight to European suicide. And I—I who believed in it as no religious fanatic has ever believed in his superstition! For its sake I helped to destroy the faith of millions of worshippers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now look at me and behold the supreme tragedy of the atheist who has lost his faith—his faith in atheism, for which more martyrs have perished than for all the creeds put together Here I stand, dumb before my scoundrel of a son; for that is what you are, boy, a common scoundrel and nothing else

AUBREY Well, why not? If I become an honest man I shall become a poor man; and then nobody will respect me nobody will admire me nobody will say thank you to me. If on the contrary I am bold, unscrupulous, acquisitive, successful and rich, everyone will respect me, admire me, court me, grovel before me Then no doubt I shall be able to afford the luxury of honesty I learnt that from my religious education

THE ELDER How dare you say that you had a religious education I shielded you from that, at least

AUBREY You thought you did, old man; but you reckoned without my mother.

THE ELDER What!

AUBREY. You forbade me to read the Bible; but my mother made me learn three verses of it every day, and whacked me if I could not repeat them without misplacing a word She threatened to whack me still worse if I told you.

THE ELDER [*thunderstruck*] Your mother!!

AUBREY So I learnt my lesson Six days on the make, and on the seventh shalt thou rest I shall spend another six years on the make, and then I shall retire and be a saint

THE ELDER A saint! Say rather the ruined

son of an incorrigibly superstitious mother
Retire now—from the life you have dishonored
There is the sea Go Drown yourself
In that graveyard there are no lying epitaphs
[*He mounts to his chapel and again gives way to utter dejection*]

AUBREY [*unconcerned*] I shall do better as a saint
A few thousands to the hospitals and the political party funds will buy me a halo
as large as Sweetie's sun hat That is my program
What have any of you to say against it?

THE SERGEANT Not the program of a gentleman, as I understand the word, sir

AUBREY You cannot be a gentleman on less than fifty thousand a year nowadays, sergeant

THE SERGEANT You can in the army, by God

AUBREY Yes because you drop bombs on sleeping villages And even then you have to be an officer Are you a gentleman?

THE SERGEANT No, sir it wouldnt pay me I couldnt afford it

Disturbance A voice is heard in complaint and lamentation It is that of the Elderly Lady, Mrs Mopply She is pursuing Colonel Tallboys down the path through the gap, the lady distracted and insistent, the colonel almost equally distracted she clutching him and stopping him he breaking loose and trying to get away from her She is dressed in black precisely as if she were in Cheltenham, except that she wears a sun helmet He is equipped with a box of sketching materials slung over his shoulder, an easel, which he has tucked under his left arm, and a sun umbrella, a substantial affair of fawn lined with red, podgily rolled up, which he carries in his right hand

MRS MOPPLY I wont be patient I wont be quiet My child is being murdered

TALLBOYS I tell you she is not being murdered Will you be good enough to excuse me whilst I attend to my business?

MRS MOPPLY Your business is to save my child She is starving

TALLBOYS Nonsense Nobody starves in this country There are plenty of dates Will you be good enough—

MRS MOPPLY Do you think my child can live on dates? She has to have a sole for breakfast, a cup of nourishing soup at eleven, a nice chop and a sweetbread for lunch, a pint of beef-tea with her ordinary afternoon tea, and a chicken and some lamb or veal—

TALLBOYS Will you be good enough—

MRS MOPPLY My poor delicate child with nothing to eat but dates! And she is the only one I have left they were all delicate—

TALLBOYS I really must— [*He breaks away and hurries off along the beach past the Abode of Love*]

MRS MOPPLY [*running after him*] Colonel, Colonel you might have the decency to listen to a distracted mother for a moment Colonel my child is dying She may be dead for all I know And nobody is doing anything nobody cares Oh dear, wont you listen— [*Her voice is lost in the distance*]

Whilst they are staring mutely after the retreating pair, the patient, still in her slave girl attire, but with some brilliant variations, comes down the path

THE PATIENT My dream has become a nightmare My mother has pursued me to these shores I cannot shake her off No woman can shake off her mother There should be no mothers there should be only women, strong women able to stand by themselves, not clingers I would kill all the clingers Mothers cling daughters cling we are all like drunken women clinging to lamp posts none of us stands upright

THE ELDER There is great comfort in clinging, and great loneliness in standing alone

THE PATIENT Hallo! [*She climbs to the St Pauls platform and peers into the cell*] A sententious anchorite! [*To Aubrey*] Who is he?

AUBREY The next worse thing to a mother a father

THE ELDER A most unhappy father

AUBREY My father, in fact

THE PATIENT If only I had had a father to stand between me and my mother's care Oh, that I had been an orphan!

THE SERGEANT You will be, miss, if the old lady drives the colonel too hard She has been at him all the morning, ever since she arrived, and I know the colonel He has a temper, and when it gives way, it's a bit of high explosive He'll kill her if she pushes him too far

THE PATIENT Let him kill her I am young and strong I want a world without parents there is no room for them in my dream I shall found a sisterhood

AUBREY All right, Mops Get thee to a nunnery

THE PATIENT It need not be a nunnery if men will come in without spoiling everything But all the women must be rich There must

be no chill of poverty There are plenty of rich women like me who hate being devoured by parasites.

AUBREY Stop You have the most disgusting mental pictures. I really cannot stand intellectual coarseness. Sweetie's vulgarity I can forgive and even enjoy But you say perfectly filthy things that stick in my mind, and break my spirit, I can bear no more of it [*He rises angrily and tries to escape by the beach past the Abode of Love*]

SWEETIE You're dainty, arnt you? If chambermaids were as dainty as you, you'd have to empty your own slops

AUBREY [*recoiling from her with a yell of disgust*] You need not throw them in my teeth, you beast [*He sits in his former place, sulking*]

THE ELDER Silence, boy These are home truths. They are good for you [*To the patient*] May I ask, young woman, what are the relations between you and my son, whom you seem to know?

THE PATIENT Popsy stole my necklace, and got me to run away with him by a wonderful speech he made about freedom and sunshine and lovely scenery Sweetie made me write it all down and sell it to a tourist agency as an advertisement And then I was devoured by parasites by tourist agencies, steamboat companies, railways, motor car people, hotel keepers, dressmakers, servants, all trying to get my money by selling me things I don't really want; shoving me all over the globe to look at what they call new skies, though they know as well as I do that it is only the same old sky everywhere; and disabling me by doing all the things for me that I ought to do for myself to keep myself in health. They preyed on me to keep themselves alive they pretended they were making me happy when it was only by drinking and drugging—cocktails and cocaine—that I could endure my life

AUBREY. I regret to have to say it, Mops; but you have not the instincts of a lady [*He sits down moodily on a stone a little way up the path*]

THE PATIENT. You fool, there is no such thing as a lady I have the instincts of a good housekeeper. I want to clean up this filthy world and keep it clean There must be other women who want it too Florence Nightingale had the same instinct when she went to clean up the Crimean war She wanted a sisterhood, but there wasn't one

THE ELDER. There were several But steeped in superstition, unfortunately.

THE PATIENT Yes, all mixed up with things that I don't believe. Women have to set themselves apart to join them. I don't want to set myself apart I want to have every woman in my sisterhood, and to have all the others strangled.

THE ELDER Down! down! down! Even the young, the strong, the rich, the beautiful, feel that they are plunging into a bottomless pit.

THE SERGEANT. Your set, miss, if you will excuse me saying so, is only a small bit of the world If you don't like the officers' mess, the ranks are open to you Look at Meek! That man could be an emperor if he laid his mind to it. but he'd rather be a private He's happier so

THE PATIENT. I don't belong to the poor, and don't want to I always knew that there were thousands of poor people; and I was taught to believe that they were poor because God arranged it that way to punish them for being dirty and drunken and dishonest, and not knowing how to read and write But I didn't know that the rich were miserable I didn't know that I was miserable I didn't know that our respectability was uppish snobbery and our religion gluttonous selfishness, and that my soul was starving on them I know now. I have found myself out thoroughly—in my dream

THE ELDER You are young. Some good man may cure you of this for a few happy years When you fall in love, life will seem worth living

THE PATIENT I did fall in love With that thing. And though I was never a hotel chambermaid I got tired of him sooner than Sweetie did. Love gets people into difficulties, not out of them. No more lovers for me I want a sisterhood. Since I came here I have been wanting to join the army, like Joan of Arc It's a brotherhood, of a sort

THE SERGEANT. Yes, miss that is so; and there used to be a peace of mind in the army that you could find nowhere else But the war made an end of that You see, miss, the great principle of soldiering, I take it, is that the world is kept going by the people who want the right thing killing the people who want the wrong thing When the soldier is doing that, he is doing the work of God, which my mother brought me up to do But that's a very different thing from killing a

man because he's a German and he killing you because you're an Englishman, We were not killing the right people in 1915 We weren't even killing the wrong people It was innocent men killing one another

THE PATIENT Just for the fun of it

THE SERGEANT No, miss it was no fun For the misery of it

THE PATIENT For the devilment of it, then

THE SERGEANT For the devilment of the godless rulers of this world. Those that did the killing hadn't even the devilment to comfort them what comfort is there in screwing on a fuse or pulling a string when the devilment it makes is from three to forty miles off, and you don't know whether you have only made a harmless hole in the ground or blown up a baby in its cradle that might have been your own? That wasn't devilment it was damnation No, miss the bottom has come out of soldiering What the gentleman here said about our all falling into a bottomless pit came home to me I feel like that too

THE ELDER Lost souls, all of us

THE PATIENT No only lost dogs Cheer up, old man the lost dogs always find their way home [*The voice of the Elderly Lady is heard returning*] Oh! here she comes again!

Mrs Mopply is still pursuing the colonel, who is walking doggedly and steadily away from her, with closed lips and a dangerous expression on his set features

MRS MOPPLY You won't even speak to me It's a disgrace I will send a cable message home to the Government about it You were sent out here to rescue my daughter from these dreadful brigands Why is nothing being done? What are the relations between yourself and that disgraceful countess who ought to have her coronet stripped off her back? You are all in a conspiracy to murder my poor lost darling child You are in league with the brigands You are—

The Colonel turns at bay, and brings down his umbrella whack on poor Mrs Mopply's helmet

MRS MOPPLY Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! [*With a series of short, dry, detached screams she totters and flutters back along the beach out of sight like a wounded bird*]

General stupefaction All stare at the Colonel aghast The Sergeant rises in amazement, and remains standing afterwards as a matter of military etiquette

THE PATIENT Oh, if only someone had done that to her twenty years ago, how different

my childhood would have been! But I must see to the poor old dear. [*She runs after her mother*]

AUBREY Colonel you have our full, complete, unreserved sympathy We thank you from the bottom of our hearts But that does not alter the fact that the man who would raise his hand to a woman, save in the way of kindness, is unworthy the name of Briton

TALLBOYS I am perfectly aware of that, sir I need no reminder The lady is entitled to an apology She shall have it

THE ELDER But have you considered the possibility of a serious injury—

TALLBOYS [*cutting him short*] My umbrella is quite uninjured, thank you The subject is now closed [*He sits down on the stone below St Pauls recently vacated by Aubrey His manner is so decisive that nobody dares carry the matter further*]

As they sit uneasily seeking one another's eyes and avoiding them again, dumbfounded by the violence of the catastrophe, a noise like that of a machine gun in action reaches their ears from afar It increases to shattering intensity as it approaches They all put their fingers to their ears It diminishes slightly, then suddenly rises to a climax of speed and uproar, and stops

TALLBOYS Meek

AUBREY Meek

SWEETIE Meek.

THE ELDER What is this? Why do you all say Meek?

Meek, dusty and gruffy, but very alert, comes down the path through the gap with a satchel of papers

TALLBOYS My dear Meek, can you not be content with a motor cycle of ordinary horse power? Must you always travel at eighty miles an hour?

MEEK I have good news for you, Colonel, and good news should travel fast

TALLBOYS For me?

MEEK Your K C B, sir [*Presenting a paper*] Honors list by wireless

TALLBOYS [*rising joyously to take the paper*] Ah! Congratulate me, my friends My dear Sarah is Lady Tallboys at last [*He resumes his seat and pores over the paper*]

AUBREY

THE SERGEANT

SWEETIE

Splendid!
You deserve it,
sir, if I may
say so
Delighted, I am
sure

[together]

THE ELDER May I crave to know the nature of the distinguished service which has won this official recognition, sir?

TALLBOYS I have won the battle of the maroons I have suppressed brigandage here I have rescued a British lady from the clutches of the brigands The Government is preparing for a general election, and has had to make the most of these modest achievements

THE ELDER Brigands! Are there any here?

TALLBOYS None

THE ELDER But—? The British lady? In their clutches?

TALLBOYS She has been in my clutches, and perfectly safe, all the time.

THE ELDER [*more and more puzzled*] Oh! Then the battle of the—

TALLBOYS Won by Private Meek. I had nothing whatever to do with it

AUBREY I invented the brigands and the British lady [*To Tallboys*] By the way, Colonel, the impressive old party in the shrine is my father.

TALLBOYS Indeed! Happy to meet you, sir, though I cannot congratulate you on your son, except in so far as you have brought into the world the most abandoned liar I have ever met.

THE ELDER. And may I ask, sir, is it your intention not only to condone my son's frauds, but to take advantage of them to accept a distinction which you have in no way earned?

TALLBOYS I have earned it, sir, ten times over Do you suppose, because the brigandage which I am honored for suppressing has no existence, that I have never suppressed real brigands? Do you forget that though this battle of which I am crowned victor was won by a subordinate, I, too, have won real battles, and seen all the honors go to a brigadier who did not even know what was happening? In the army these things average themselves out merit is rewarded in the long run. Justice is none the less justice though it is always delayed, and finally done by mistake My turn today Private Meek's tomorrow

THE FATHER. And meanwhile Mr Meek—this humble and worthy soldier—is to remain in obscurity and poverty whilst you are strutting as a K C B

TALLBOYS How I envy him! Look at me and look at him! I, loaded with responsi-

bilities whilst my hands are tied, my body disabled, my mind crippled because a colonel must not do anything but give orders and look significant and profound when his mind is entirely vacant! he, free to turn his hand to everything and to look like an idiot when he feels like one! I have been driven to sketching in watercolors because I may not use my hands in life's daily useful business A commanding officer must not do this, must not do that, must not do the other, must not do anything but tell other men to do it He may not even converse with them. I see this man Meek doing everything that is natural to a complete man. carpentering, painting, digging, pulling and hauling, fetching and carrying, helping himself and everybody else, whilst I, with a bigger body to exercise and quite as much energy, must loaf and loll, allowed to do nothing but read the papers and drink brandy and water to prevent myself going mad I should have become a drunkard had it not been for the colors

THE SERGEANT Ah yes, sir, the colors The fear of disgracing them has kept me off the drink many a time

TALLBOYS Man I do not mean the regimental colors, but the watercolors How willingly would I exchange my pay, my rank, my K C B, for Meek's poverty, his obscurity!

MEEK. But, my dear Colonel—sorry, sir what I mean to say is that you can become a private if you wish Nothing easier I have done it again and again You resign your commission; take a new and very common name by deed poll, dye your hair and give your age to the recruiting sergeant as twenty-two, and there you are! You can select your own regiment

TALLBOYS Meek. you should not tantalize your commanding officer No doubt you are an extraordinary soldier But have you ever passed the extreme and final test of manly courage?

MEEK Which one is that, sir?

TALLBOYS. Have you ever married?

MEEK No, sir

TALLBOYS Then do not ask me why I do not resign my commission and become a free and happy private My wife would not let me

THE COUNTESS Why dont you hit her on the head with your umbrella?

TALLBOYS. I dare not There are moments when I wish some other man would. But not

in my presence I should kill him

THE ELDER We are all slaves But at least your son is an honest man

TALLBOYS Is he? I am glad to hear it I have not spoken to him since he shirked military service at the beginning of the war and went into trade as a contractor He is now so enormously rich that I cannot afford to keep up his acquaintance Neither need you keep up that of your son By the way, he passes here as the half step-brother of this lady, the Countess Valbrioni

SWEETIE Valbrioni be blowed! My name is Susan Simpkins Being a countess isn't worth a damn There's no variety in it no excitement What I want is a month's leave for the sergeant Wont you give it to him, Colonel?

TALLBOYS What for?

SWEETIE Never mind what for A fortnight might do, but I don't know for certain yet. There's something steadying about him, and I suppose I will have to settle down some day

TALLBOYS Nonsense! The sergeant is a pious man, not your sort Eh, Sergeant?

SERGEANT Well, sir, a man should have one woman to prevent him from thinking too much about women in general You cannot read your Bible undisturbed if visions and wandering thoughts keep coming between you and it. And a pious man should not marry a pious woman two of a trade never agree Besides, it would give the children a onesided view of life Life is very mixed, sir it is not all piety and it is not all gaiety This young woman has no conscience, but I have enough for two I have no money, but she seems to have enough for two Mind I am not committing myself, but I will go so far as to say that I am not dead set against it. On the plane of this world and its vanities—and we've got to live in it, you know, sir—she appeals to me

AUBREY Take care, sergeant Constancy is not Sweetie's strong point.

THE SERGEANT Neither is it mine As a single man and a wandering soldier I am fair game for every woman But if I settle down with this girl she will keep the others off I'm a bit tired of adventures

SWEETIE Well, if the truth must be told, so am I We were made for one another, Sergeant What do you say?

THE SERGEANT Well, I don't mind keeping

company for a while, Susan, just to see how we get along together

The voice of Mrs Mopply is again heard Its tone is hardy and even threatening, and its sound is approaching rapidly

MRS MOPPLY'S VOICE You just let me alone, will you? Nobody asked you to interfere Get away with you

General awe and dismay Mrs Mopply appears striding resolutely along the beach She walks straight up to the Colonel, and is about to address him when he rises firmly to the occasion and takes the word out of her mouth

TALLBOYS Mrs Mopply I have a duty to you which I must discharge at once At our last meeting, I struck you

MRS MOPPLY Struck me! You bashed me Is that what you mean?

TALLBOYS If you consider my expression inadequate I am willing to amend it. Let us put it that I bashed you Well, I apologize without reserve, fully and amply If you wish, I will give it to you in writing

MRS MOPPLY Very well Since you express your regret, I suppose there is nothing more to be said

TALLBOYS [*darkening ominously*] Pardon me I apologized. I did not express my regret

AUBREY Oh, for heaven's sake, Colonel, don't start her again. Don't qualify your apology in any way

MRS MOPPLY You shut up, whoever you are

TALLBOYS I do not qualify my apology in the least My apology is complete The lady has a right to it My action was inexcusable But no lady—no human being—has a right to impose a falsehood on me I do not regret my action I have never done anything which gave me more thorough and hearty satisfaction When I was a company officer I once cut down an enemy in the field Had I not done so he would have cut me down It gave me no satisfaction I was half ashamed of it I have never before spoken of it But this time I struck with unmixed enjoyment In fact I am grateful to Mrs Mopply I owe her one of the very few delightfully satisfactory moments of my life

MRS MOPPLY Well, that's a pretty sort of apology, isn't it?

TALLBOYS [*firmly*] I have nothing to add, madam

MRS MOPPLY Well, I forgive you, you peppy old blighter

Sensation They catch their breaths, and stare at one another in consternation The patient arrives

THE PATIENT. I am sorry to say, Colonel Tallboys, that you have unsettled my mother's reason. She wont believe that I am her daughter She's not a bit like herself

MRS MOPPLY Isnt she? What do you know about myself? my real self? They told me lies, and I had to pretend to be somebody quite different.

TALLBOYS Who told you lies, madam? It was not with my authority.

MRS MOPPLY I wasnt thinking of you My mother told me lies. My nurse told me lies My governess told me lies Everybody told me lies The world is not a bit like what they said it was I wasnt a bit like what they said I ought to be I thought I had to pretend And I neednt have pretended at all

THE ELDER Another victim! She, too, is falling through the bottomless abyss.

MRS MOPPLY I dont know who you are or what you think you mean; but you have just hit it I dont know my head from my heels Why did they tell me that children couldnt live without medicine and three meat meals a day? Do you know that I have killed two of my children because they told me that? My own children! Murdered them, just!

THE ELDER Medea! Medea!

MRS MOPPLY. It isnt an idea it's the truth. I will never believe anything again as long as I live I'd have killed the only one I had left if she hadnt run away from me I was told to sacrifice myself—to live for others; and I did it if ever a woman did They told me that everyone would love me for it, and I thought they would, but my daughter ran away when I had sacrificed myself to her until I found myself wishing she would die like the others and leave me a little to myself And now I find it was not only my daughter that hated me but that all my friends, all the time they were pretending to sympathize, were just longing to bash me over the head with their umbrellas This poor man only did what all the rest would have done if theyd dared. When I said I forgave you I meant it I am greatly obliged to you. *[She kisses him]* But now what am I to do? How am I to behave in a world thats just the opposite of everything I was told about it?

THE PATIENT. Steady, mother! steady!

steady! Sit down. *[She picks up a heavy stone and places it near the Abode of Love for Mrs Mopply to sit on].*

MRS MOPPLY *[seating herself]* Dont you call me mother Do you think my daughter could carry rocks about like that? she that had to call the nurse to pick up her Pekingese dog when she wanted to pet it! You think you can get round me by pretending to be my daughter; but that just shews what a fool you are, for I hate my daughter and my daughter hates me, because I sacrificed myself to her. She was a horrid selfish girl, always ill and complaining, and never satisfied, no matter how much you did for her. The only sensible thing she ever did was to steal her own necklace and sell it and run away to spend the money on herself I expect she's in bed somewhere with a dozen nurses and six doctors all dancing attendance on her Youre not a bit like her, thank goodness thats why Ive taken a fancy to you You come with me, darling I have lots of money, and sixty years of a misspent life to make up for; so you will have a good time with me Come with me as my companion; and lets forget that there are such miserable things in the world as mothers and daughters

THE PATIENT. What use shall we be to one another?

MRS MOPPLY None, thank God We can do without one another if we dont hit it off.

THE PATIENT Righto! I'll take you on trial until Ive had time to look about me and see what I'm going to do But only on trial, mind

MRS MOPPLY. Just so, darling We'll both be on trial So thats settled.

THE PATIENT And now, Mr Meek, what about the little commission you promised to do for me? Have you brought back my passport?

THE COUNTESS. Your passport! Whatever for?

AUBREY What have you been up to, Mops? Are you going to desert me?

Meek advances and empties a heap of passports from his satchel on the sand, kneeling down to sort out the patient's

TALLBOYS What is the meaning of this? Whose passports are these? What are you doing with them? Where did you get them?

MEEK Everybody within fifty miles is asking me to get a passport visa'd

TALLBOYS Visa'd! For what country?

MEEK For Beotia, sir

TALLBOYS Beotia?

MEEK Yessir The Union of Federated Sensible Societies, sir The U F S S Everybody wants to go there now, sir

THE COUNTESS Well I never

THE ELDER. And what is to become of our unhappy country if all its inhabitants desert it for an outlandish place in which even property is not respected?

MEEK No fear, sir they wont have us They wont admit any more English, sir they say their lunatic asylums are too full already I couldnt get a single visa, except [*to the Colonel*] for you, sir

TALLBOYS For me! Damn their impudence! I never asked for one

MEEK No, sir, but their people have so much leisure that they are at their wits' end for some occupation to keep them out of mischief They want to introduce the only institution of ours that they admire

THE ELDER And pray which one is that?

MEEK The English school of watercolor painting, sir Theyve seen some of the Colonel's work, and theyll make him head of their centres of repose and culture if he'll settle there

TALLBOYS This cannot be true, Meek It indicates a degree of intelligence of which no Government is capable

MEEK It's true, sir, I assure you

TALLBOYS But my wife—

MEEK Yessir I told them [*He repacks his satchel*]

TALLBOYS Well, well there is nothing for it but to return to our own country

THE ELDER Can our own country return to its senses, sir? that is the question

TALLBOYS Ask Meek.

MEEK No use, sir all the English privates want to be colonels there's no salvation for snobs [*To Tallboys*] Shall I see about getting the expedition back to England, sir?

TALLBOYS Yes And get me two tubes of rose madder and a big one of Chinese White, will you?

MEEK [*about to go*] Yessir

THE ELDER Stop There are police in England What is to become of my son there?

SWEETIE [*rising*] Make Popsy a preacher, old man. But dont start him until weve gone

THE ELDER Preach, my son, preach to your heart's content Do anything rather than steal and make your military crimes an ex-

cuse for your civil ones Let men call you the reverend Let them call you anything rather than thief

AUBREY [*rising*] If I may be allowed to improve the occasion for a moment—

General consternation All who are seated rise in alarm, except the patient, who jumps up and claps her hands in mischievous encouragement to the orator

MRS MOPPLY

SWEETIE

THE ELDER

THE PATIENT

You hold your tongue, young man
Oh Lord! we're in for it now
Shame and silence would better become you, sir
Go on, Pops It's the only thing you do well

AUBREY [*continuing*—it is clear to me that though we seem to be dispersing quietly to do very ordinary things Sweetie and the Sergeant to get married [*the Sergeant hastily steals down from his grotto, beckoning to Sweetie to follow him They both escape along the beach*] the colonel to his wife, his watercolors, and his K C B [*the colonel hurries away noiselessly in the opposite direction*] Napoleon Alexander Trotsky Meek to his job of repatriating the expedition [*Meek takes to flight up the path through the gap*] Mops, like Saint Teresa, to found an unladylike sisterhood with her mother as cook-housekeeper [*Mrs Mopply hastily follows the sergeant, dragging with her the patient, who is listening to Aubrey with signs of becoming rapt in his discourse*] yet they are all, like my father here, falling, falling, falling endlessly and hopelessly through a void in which they can find no footing [*The Elder vanishes into the recesses of St Pauls, leaving his son to preach in solitude*] There is something fantastic about them, something unreal and perverse, something profoundly unsatisfactory They are too absurd to be believed in, yet they are not fictions the newspapers are full of them what storyteller, however reckless a liar, would dare to invent figures so improbable as men and women with their minds stripped naked? Naked bodies no longer shock us our sunbathers, grinning at us from every illustrated summer number of our magazines, are nuder than shorn lambs But the horror of the naked mind is still more than we can bear Throw off the last rag of

your bathing costume; and I shall not blench nor expect you to blush. You may even throw away the outer garments of your souls the manners, the morals, the decencies Swear; use dirty words; drink cocktails; kiss and caress and cuddle until girls who are like roses at eighteen are like battered demureps at twenty-two. in all these ways the bright young things of the victory have scandalized their dull old pre-war elders and left nobody but their bright young selves a penny the worse But how are we to bear this dreadful new nakedness. the nakedness of the souls who until now have always disguised themselves from one another in beautiful impossible idealisms to enable them to bear one another's company The iron lightning of war has burnt great rents in these angelic veils, just as it has smashed great holes in our cathedral roofs and torn great gashes in our hill-sides Our souls go in rags now, and the young are spying through the holes and getting glimpses of the reality that was hidden And they are not horrified they exult in having found us out: they expose their own souls; and when we their elders desperately try to patch our torn clothes with scraps of the old material, the young lay violent hands on us and tear from us even the rags that were left to us But when they have stripped themselves and us utterly naked, will they be able to bear the spectacle? You have seen me try to strip my soul before my father, but when these two young women stripped themselves more boldly than I—when the old woman had the mask struck from her soul and revelled in it instead of dying of it—I shrank from the revelation as from a wind bringing from the unknown regions of the future a breath which may be a breath of life, but of a life too keen for me to bear, and therefore for me a blast of death I stand midway between youth and age like a man who has missed his train too late for the last and too early for the next What am I to do? What am I? A soldier who has lost his nerve, a thief who at his first great theft has found honesty the best policy and restored his booty to its owner Nature never intended me for soldiering or thieving. I am by nature and destiny a preacher I am the new Ecclesiastes But I have no Bible, no creed. the war has shot both out of my hands The war has been a fiery forcing house in which we have grown with a rush like flowers in a late spring follow-

ing a terrible winter And with what result? This that we have outgrown our religion, outgrown our political system, outgrown our own strength of mind and character The fatal word NOT has been miraculously inserted into all our creeds. in the desecrated temples where we knelt murmuring "I believe" we stand with stiff knees and stiffer necks shouting "Up, all! the erect posture is the mark of the man let lesser creatures kneel and crawl we will not kneel and we do not believe " But what next? Is no enough? For a boy, yes. for a man, never Are we any the less obsessed with a belief when we are denying it than when we were affirming it? No I must have affirmations to preach. Without them the young will not listen to me, for even the young grow tired of denials The negative-monger falls before the soldiers, the men of action, the fighters, strong in the old uncompromising affirmations which give them status, duties, certainty of consequences; so that the pugnacious spirit of man in them can reach out and strike deathblows with steadfastly closed minds Their way is straight and sure, but it is the way of death, and the preacher must preach the way of life Oh, if I could only find it! [*A white sea fog swirls up from the beach to his feet, rising and thickening round him*] I am ignorant. I have lost my nerve and am intimidated all I know is that I must find the way of life, for myself and all of us, or we shall surely perish. And meanwhile my gift has possession of me I must preach and preach and preach no matter how late the hour and how short the day, no matter whether I have nothing to say—

The fog has enveloped him, the gap with its grottoes is lost to sight; the ponderous stones are wisps of shifting white cloud, there is left only fog. impenetrable fog, but the incorrigible preacher will not be denied his peroration, which, could we only hear it distinctly, would probably run—

—or whether in some Pentecostal flame of revelation the Spirit will descend on me and inspire me with a message the sound whereof shall go out unto all lands and realize for us at last the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever and ever. Amen

The audience disperses (or the reader puts down the book) impressed in the English manner with the Pentecostal flame and the echo from the Lord's Prayer. But fine words butter no parsnips A few of the choicer spirits will know that the

Pentecostal flame is always alight at the service of those strong enough to bear its terrible intensity They will not forget that it is accompanied by a rushing mighty wind, and that any rascal who happens to be also a windbag can get a prodigious volume of talk out of it without ever going near enough to be shrivelled up The author, though himself a professional talk maker, does

not believe that the world can be saved by talk alone He has given the rascal the last word, but his own favorite is the woman of action, who begins by knocking the wind out of the rascal, and ends with a cheerful conviction that the lost dogs always find their way home So they will, perhaps, if the women go out and look for them

THE END

XLI

VILLAGE WOOING

A COMEDIETTINA FOR TWO VOICES

FIRST CONVERSATION

The lounge deck of the Empress of Patagonia, a pleasure ship Two of the deck chairs are occupied by A, a literary looking pale gentleman under forty in green spectacles, a limp black beard, and a tropical suit of white silk, who is writing and does not wish to be disturbed, and Z, a young woman, presentable but not aristocratic, who is bored with her book She is undressed for bathing, but is very modestly covered up with a not too flamboyant wrap

Z Excuse me Could you tell me the time?

A [curtly] Eleven

Z My watch makes it half past ten

A The clocks were put on half an hour last night We are going east

Z I always think it adds to the interest of a voyage having to put on your watch

A I am glad you are so easily interested [he resumes his writing pointedly]

Z The steward will be round with the soup in half an hour I thought we should have to wait an hour

A I never take it It interrupts my work.

Z Why do you work all the time? It's not what one comes on a pleasure cruise for, is it?

A Work is my only pleasure

Z Oh, that's not good sense, is it? It gives me the pip to see you always sitting there over your writing, and never enjoying yourself, nor even taking a drop of soup You should get up and have a game of deck quoits you will feel ever so much better after it

A I feel perfectly well, thank you And I loathe deck games, especially deck quoits The slapping of those silly things on the deck destroys the quiet of the ship

Z Oh, I see That is why you select this

end of the deck I often wondered why

A Within the last fortnight you have inspected the priceless antiquities of Naples, Athens, Egypt, and the Holy Land Please occupy your mind with them until the soup comes

Z I never cared much for geography Where are we now?

A We are on the Red Sea

Z But it's blue

A What did you expect it to be?

Z Well, I didn't know what color the sea might be in these parts I always thought the Red Sea would be red

A Well, it isn't.

Z And isn't the Black Sea black?

A It is precisely the color of the sea at Margate

Z [eagerly] Oh, I am so glad you know Margate There's no place like it in the season, is there?

A I don't know I have never been there.

Z [disappointed] Oh, you ought to go You could write a book about it

A [shudders, sighs, and pretends to write very hard]

A pause

Z I wonder why they call it the Red Sea

A Because their fathers did. Why do you call America America?

Z Well, because it is America What else would you call it?

A Oh, call it what you like, dear lady, but I have five hundred words to write before lunch, and I cannot do that if I talk to you

Z [sympathetically] Yes it is awful to have to talk to people, isn't it? Oh, that reminds me I have something really interesting to tell you I believe the man in the cabin next

mine beats his wife

A I feel a little like him myself Some women would provoke any men to beat them

Z I will say this for him, that she always begins it

A No doubt

Z I hate a nagger dont you?

A It is your privilege as a woman to have the last word Please take it and dont end all your remarks with a question

Z You are funny

A Am I? I never felt less funny in my life

Z I cant make you out at all. I am rather good at making out people as a rule, but I cant make head or tail of you.

A I am not here to be made out You are not here to make people out, but to revel in the enjoyments you have paid for Deck tennis, deck quoits, shuffleboard, golf, squash rackets, the swimming pool, the gymnasium all invite you.

Z I am no good at games. besides, theyre silly. I'd rather sit and talk

A Then for heaven's sake talk to somebody else I have no time for talk I have to work my passage

Z What do you mean work your passage? You are not a sailor

A No I make a precarious living on board ship by writing the Marco Polo Series of Chatty Guide Books Unless I complete two thousand words a day I am bankrupt I cannot complete them if you persist in talking to me

Z Do you mean you are writing a book about this cruise?

A I am trying to—under great difficulties

Z Will I be in it?

A [*grimly*] You will.

Z How thrilling! I have never been put in a book before You will read me what you have written about me, wont you?

A When the book is published you can read it to your heart's content.

Z But I should like you to get me right After all, what do you know about me? I will tell you the whole of my life if you like

A Great heavens, NO. Please dont.

Z Oh, I dont care who knows it

A Evidently You would hardly offer to tell it to a perfect stranger if you cared, or if it was of the smallest interest.

Z Oh, I'd never think of you as a stranger. Here we are on the same ship, arnt we? And most people would think my life quite a

romance. Wouldnt you really like to hear it?

A No, I tell you When I want romances I invent them for myself.

Z Oh, well, perhaps you wouldnt think it very wonderful But it was a regular treat for me You may think because I am well dressed and travelling de licks and all that, that I am an educated lady But I'm not

A I never supposed for a moment that you were

Z But how could you know? How did you find out?

A I didnt find out I knew

Z Who told you?

A Nobody told me

Z Then how did you know?

A [*exasperated*] How do I know that a parrot isnt a bird of paradise?

Z Theyre different

A Precisely

Z There you are, you see But what would you take me for if you met me in a third class carriage?

A I should not notice you

Z I bet you would I maynt be a beauty; but when I get into a railway carriage every man in it has a look at me.

A I am not Everyman Everyman thinks that every woman that steps into a railway carriage may be the right woman But she is always a disappointment

Z Same with the women, isnt it? If you were a woman youd know

A I am a woman; and you are a man, with a slight difference that doesnt matter except on special occasions

Z Oh, what a thing to say! I never could bring myself to believe that I know, of course, that men have their weaknesses and their tempers; but all the same there is something wonderful you can get from a man that you never could get from a woman. Dont you think so?

A Inexperienced men think there is something wonderful you can get from a woman that you never could get from a man Hence many unhappy marriages

Z Are you married?

A Widower. Are you?

Z Oh, thats the first time youve asked me a question We're getting on, arnt we?

A No I am not getting on with my work

Z Youre an intellectual, arnt you?

A What do you think you mean by an intellectual?

z Only that you consider me no better than an idiot, and that you were a bad husband, most likely

A You are quite right on both points

z I thought so

A And now, please, may I go on with my work?

z Please yourself I'm not hundering you

A. Thank you [*he resumes his writing*]

A pause

z What books would you recommend me to read to improve my mind?

A [*shouting furiously*] Steward!

z Oh, you shouldnt trouble the steward now He's busy getting the soup

A I want him to remove my chair to the very furthest extremity of this ship

z I always say it's fresher under the awning at the end. You dont mind if I move too, do you?

A. If you persecute me any more I shall go overboard. Dont you see that I want to be left alone to work, and that your chatter is preventing me from working?

z [*sympathetically*] It is annoying to have somebody talking to you all the time when you dont want to But it's just as bad when you want to talk, and the other person wont, isnt it?

A. There are three or four hundred persons on this ship Cannot you find one of them with the same insatiable thirst for conversation as yourself?

z Well, but we all have to make ourselves agreeable, havnt we?

A. Not at oneanother's expense You are not making yourself agreeable to me at present you are driving me mad.

z My father used to say that men and women are always driving oneanother mad

A That sounds literary Was your father a man of letters?

z Yes I should think he was A postman

A A what?

z A postman. A village postman.

A Ha ha! Ha ha ha!

z What is there funny in that?

A I dont know Ha ha! The postman's daughter hath ripe red lips butter and eggs and a pound of cheese! Ha ha ha!

z Well, I'm glad Ive amused you. But I dont think it's very polite of you to laugh at my father

A [*punctiliously—recovering himself*] You are right I was rude But a good laugh is

worth a hundred pounds to me I feel a different man Forgive me You see, you quoted a remark of your father's—almost an epigram—which suggested that he must have been a man of genius

z Well, so he was He had a genius for walking

A For what?

z For walking When he was a child, he won a prize as The Infant Pedestrian And would you believe it, my mother was that in-doory that she grudged having to go out and do her marketing After we had a telephone put in she never went out at all

A Thats strange As she was never out and he was never in, the household should have been a quiet one, but that remark of his about men and women driving oneanother mad rather suggests the opposite

z So it was the opposite She was always complaining of being lonely, and he was always at her to take more exercise When they were not quarrelling about that, they were quarrelling about me You see they had great ambitions for me She wanted me to be a parlormaid in a great house He wanted me to be a telephone operator He said there is no future for the great houses and a great future for telephones

A. And you? Had you no ambition for yourself?

z Oh, I wanted to be something romantic, like an acrobat in a circus

A. And what actually happened?

z I became shop assistant and telephone operator in the village shop

A Do village shop assistants and telephone girls—

z Operators

A Pardon operators Do they earn enough to take cruises round the world in pleasure ships?

z Not they I won the first prize in a newspaper competition My mother wanted me to save it she said it would help me to get a thrifty husband My father told me to blue it all in a lump while I had the chance "You will be poor all your life," he said, "but now you have the chance of living at the rate of five thousand a year for four months Dont miss it," he said "see what it's like Have your fling," he said, "for they never can take that away from you once youve had it " His idea was a walking tour, spending the nights in the best hotels but I chose the ship be-

cause it's more dressy and more people to look at Besides, I can get all the walking I want round the deck At the end of the cruise back I go to the village shop without a penny.

A Have they found out here that you are not a lady?

z The Americans dont know the difference they think my telephone talk is aristocratic, and the English wont speak to anyone anyhow And lots of them are just like me

A Well, how do you like living at the rate of five thousand a year? Is it worth it?

z It is while the novelty lasts You see, when youre at home you get tired of doing the same thing every day the same places! the same faces! the same old round When you get a holiday you go off in a crowded hot excursion train to the seaside and make yourself tired and miserable just because it's a change, and youd do anything for a change But here it's change all the time until you begin to realize what it is to have a settled home and belong somewhere I shant be sorry to get home to the shop and the telephone I get such a dreadful lost dog feeling sometimes Other times it seems such a foolish waste of money And I hate wasting money

A Thats an extremely attractive point in your character My wife used to waste my money Stick to that and you will get married in no time.

z. Oh, I have had plenty of offers But you know it's a terrible thing to be a poor man's wife when you have been accustomed to a clean decent job I have seen so many bright jolly girls turn into dirty old drudges through getting married

A Dont be afraid of dirt Mine is a clean job, but I often wish I had a dirty one to exercise me and keep me in health Women are so set on clean collars that they make their sons clerks when they would be stronger and earn more money as navvies I wish I was a navvy instead of writing guide books.

z. Well, whats to prevent you?

A I am not trained to manual work Half an hour of it would make me wish myself dead And five minutes of my work would produce a strike among the navvies I am only a writing machine, just as a navvy is a digging machine.

z I dont think the world is rightly arranged do you?

A We must take the world as we find it.

It's we that are not rightly arranged

• z Thats what I mean. Well, I suppose I mustnt interrupt your work

A You mean that the steward is coming round with the soup at last

z Well, it's half past eleven, isnt it?

The steward appears with the soup and offers it to z, who seizes it eagerly, then to A.

A No, thank you No soup

He buries himself in his work, unmolested.

She buries herself in the soup.

SECOND CONVERSATION

In a village shop and post office on the Wiltshire Downs on a fine summer morning The counter is for general shopping for most of its length, but one end is reserved and railed in for postal business A couple of chairs are available for customers The goods for sale include ginger beer in stone bottles, tablets of milk chocolate, glass jars of sweets containing (inter alia) sugared almonds, all on the counter; cheese, butter, and Hovis bread handy to the scales, and, in front of the counter, a sack of apples on the floor and some string bags hanging from the rafters

z [*invisible*] Th-reee ni-nnn Sorry no such number Whoo-mmm do you want? Doctor Byles? One fi-fff You are through

A comes in He is in hiking costume, with stick and rucksack, but wears well cut breeches (not plus fours) instead of shorts Seeing nobody to attend to him he raps loudly on the counter with his stick z emerges

A I want a packet of milk chocolate—

z Thanks very much

A [*continuing*]—a couple of hard apples—

z Thanks very much [*She comes out through the counter to get them from the sack*]

A [*continuing*]—quarter of a pound of Cheddar cheese—

z Thanks very much

A Dont interrupt me You can express your gratitude for the order when I have finished. Quarter of a pound of your best butter, a small loaf of Hovis, and twopenny-worth of sugared almonds

z. Anything else?

A No, thank you

z Thanks very much [*she goes back through the counter to cut and weigh the butter and cheese*].

He sits down watching her deft but leisurely proceedings

A Do you sell baskets?

z We sell everything. Hadnt you better

have a string bag? It's handier, and it packs away almost to nothing when it's empty

A What is a string bag? Shew me one

Z [*coming out and taking one down*] This is the cheapest Or would you like a better quality with a Zip fastening?

A Certainly not I should have the trouble of opening and shutting it, and the worry of wondering whether it would open or shut, with no compensatory advantage whatever

Z That's just like you You're not a bit changed.

A What do you mean? I have been in this shop for less than two minutes Why should I have changed in that time?

Z Excuse me I shouldn't have mentioned it. Will you take a string bag?

A Yes

Z Thanks very much Shall I put the rest of the order into it?

A Of course What else do you suppose I am buying it for? Have you any buttermilk?

Z Sorry We don't stock it

A Any ginger beer?

Z Yes We have a very good local brew

A Shove a bottle into the string bag

Z Thanks very much

A How many times a day do you say thanks very much?

Z Depends on the number of orders

A Don't say it to me again, if you don't mind It gets on my nerves

Z It used to get on mine, at first But I am used to it

A Have you a guide book of this village?

Z Sorry There's a leaflet in the church, written by the vicar You are expected to put tuppence in the box for it Excuse me, but the chocolates are tuppence, sixpence, and a shilling Which size would you run to?

A It is a poor heart that never rejoices I will have a shilling one

Z Thanks very much

A Don't

Z Excuse me I can't help it I say it without thinking same as if you touched a button
The telephone rings

A Someone has touched the button

Z [*vanishing into the post office section*] What number please? Whitehall on-n-n-e two on-n-n-e two I will ring you Whitehall one two one two Yes [*She reappears*] That's a police call

A You need not point the information at me I am not the criminal.

Z Oh, it isn't a criminal Somebody that's been broadcasted on the wireless as lost. You know the sort of thing Missing from his home since January the first Last seen in a deck chair on the Empress of Patagonia talking to a female Suffering from loss of memory.

A How extraor— [*the telephone rings again*]

Z Excuse me [*She vanishes*] You are through to Whitehall. [*She reappears*]

A You have hit on an extraordinary coincidence I wonder whether you will believe me when I tell you that in January last I was sitting on the deck of a ship named the Empress of Patagonia, and that I was talking to a female—or rather she was talking to me How that woman did talk!

Z And are you suffering from loss of memory?

A Certainly not I never forget anything

Z Oh, then it can't be you, can it?

A There! Can it? That woman always finished up with can it? won't it? isn't it? so that you had to answer her out of common politeness Take care never to pick up that trick or you will be murdered some day

Z Some people are like that It often goes with orange colored eyes [*or whatever color her eyes happen to be*] Did you notice the color of her eyes?

A No I never notice things like that I am not a detective It is people's characters that impress me, I can't tell you the color of her hair or the shape of her nose, but I can tell you that she was a most fearful nuisance How much does all that come to?

Z The string bag sixpence, chocolates a shilling one and sixpence The ginger beer is—

A Spare me the details Will ten shillings cover it?

Z Oh yes, of course You shouldn't be so careless about money

A [*presenting a Treasury note*] Cease preaching Take it, and give me the change

Z Let me see Eighteenpence, and fourpence for the ginger beer is one and tenpence, isn't it?

A Have I denied it?

Z Cheese threepence two and a penny, butter sixpence two and sevenpence, apples we sell by the pound Hadn't you better have a pound?

A How many to the pound?

Z Three

A I cannot eat more than two apples at a

time Charge me for a pound; and eat the odd one yourself

z Oh well, say threepence for two thats two and tenpence, isnt it?

a I dont know.

z Hovis, tuppence halfpenny. Three shillings and a halfpenny. Do you happen to have a halfpenny to save having to take fip-pence halfpenny in coppers?

a. I hate halfpennies. I always throw them away Stop I have one Here.

z Thanks very much [*Handing him his change coin by coin*] Three, four, five, seven and six, ten Thanks very much

a [*pocketing his change, but remaining comfortably seated*] Dont you find it rather dull in this village shop saying thanks very much all day?

z Well, no matter where you are you are doing the same thing all day and every day, arnt you? The only way to get it off your mind is to live in the same place and stick at the same job. Then you never have to think about it Thats the way the people live here; and they live for ever so long eighty's no age here. Grandfather will be a hundred and two in August Thats because he's never had to worry about what he'll do or where he'll go He just imagines and imagines It's the only way to be happy and longlived

a But if your imagination has only one village in it it must be pretty bare How would you like to live in a room with only one chair in it

z Well, if you have only one seat what more do you want than one chair? Up at the castle there are thirtysix chairs of one sort or another in the big drawing room, but Lady Flopping cant flop on more than one, can she?

a [*pointing to the vacant chair*] May I suggest that you flop on that one while we talk?

z [*sitting down*] Thanks very much

a I am not interrupting your work, I hope There is nothing so maddening as to be talked to when you want to work

z Talking is part of the work in a village shop

a. Tell me. do you ever read?

z I used to read travels and guide books We used to stock the Marco Polo series I was mad about travelling I had daydreams about the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, and all that flapdoodle

a. Flapdoodle!

z. Well, I suppose I shouldnt call it that,

but it ended in my going to Rome and Athens They were all right, but the old parts were half knocked down; and I couldnt see any glory or grandeur different to Cheltenham. I was glad to be home again And I had so wanted to meet the Marco Polo man and walk about with him in the ruins by moonlight and hear him go on about them!

a The Marco Polo man! The milkman! the postman! the muffin man! the Marco Polo man! Some frustrated poet, earning his crust by quoting scraps of verse to bring the Call of the East to dreaming telephone girls.

z Operators

a Operators dont dream Girls! girls of the golden west Did that poor devil never bring you the Call of the East?

z. I'd read about it in novels and seen it on the films They were all about moony drunkards and sheeks and the sort of girls that go dotty about them. I went right round the world to see the reality Pretty places, of course, but the heat! and the mosquitoes! and the smells! Travelling just destroyed the world for me as I imagined it Give me this village all the time

a Had you no thrill when you stood somewhere where a poet had said "Stop; for thy tread is on an empire's dust"?

z A guide, you mean Theyd take the poetry out of anything, and all the time youre thinking what you ought to give them If you fancy empires' dusts and all that sort of thing you should meet our vicar and start him talking about our standing stones, and the barrows on the downs, and the Mound Every grain of our dust, he says, is full of history. Same everywhere, I expect

a. Are you married?

z No Why? Have you any intentions?

a Dont be in a hurry Weve known each other less than ten minutes

z How much better do you think you will know me when we have talked for twenty years?

a. That is profoundly true Still, I must think it over.

z Nobody would ever marry if they thought it over. Youve got to take your chance, no matter how long you think

a You are in a hurry.

z Well, I am past the age at which girls marry here, though I'm the pick of this village Thats because I thought all my offers over. So I have made up my mind to take the

next man that asks me, provided he's reasonable suitable.

A Do I strike you as being reasonably suitable?

Z Well, I think I have the sort of common-sense you need to keep you straight And you being a widower know what to expect from a woman An inexperienced man expects the earth

A How do you know that I am a widower?

Z You told me

A Did I? When did I tell you?

Z Never mind You did I have noticed you have a bad memory, but I have a very good one, so it wont matter

A Steady Steady I have not yet made myself liable to an action for breach of promise

Z Dont be afraid I'm not that sort We dont consider it respectable here

A Should I get any money with you? Do you own the shop?

Z No All the money I ever had I blued on a trip round the world. But Mrs Ward is getting too old for the business she couldnt run it now without me If you could afford to buy her an annuity she'd sell it

A I dont know how much annuities cost

Z You will find it in Whitaker's almanac

A This is rather upsetting Somehow I have always taken it for granted that when I married again I'd marry a woman with money

Z Oh, that wouldnt suit you at all She'd want to spend it going into society and travelling about How could you bear that sort of life? you that never spoke to anyone on the ship and wouldnt take any part in their games and dances! When it got about that you were the Marco Polo man—the man of all our dreams as you might say—I made a bet that I'd get you to talk to me, and I had all the trouble in the world to win it

A Do you mean to say that we have met before? That you were on that trip round the world?

Z Of course I do But you never notice anything Youre always reading or writing The world doesnt exist for you You never looked at merely Youre shy with strangers, arnt you?

A I am absolutely certain I never spoke to any woman on that ship If I talk to women they always want to marry me

Z Well, there you are, you see! The moment I set eyes on you I said to myself, "Now thats the sort of man that would suit me as a husband " I'd have said it even if you hadnt been the Marco Polo man

A Love at first sight what?

Z Oh no You know, if I fell in love with a man I'd never marry him, he could make me so miserable But there was something about you I dont exactly know what, but it made me feel that I could do with you in the house, and then I could fall in love with anyone I liked without any fear of making a fool of myself I suppose it was because you are one of the quiet sort and dont run after women.

A How do you know I dont run after women?

Z Well, if you want to know, it's because you didnt run after me You mightnt believe it, but men do run after me

A Why?

Z Oh, how do I know? They dont know, themselves But the lot of money they spend on things they dont want merely to come in and have a look at me and a word with me, you wouldnt believe It's worth at least twenty pounds a year to the business

A [*putting on his glasses and looking at her attentively for the first time*] I shouldnt call you a pretty woman

Z Oh, I'm not pretty But what you might call desirable, dont you think?

A [*alarmed*] No I dont think May I explain? I am a man of letters and a gentleman. I am accustomed to associate with ladies That means that I am accustomed to speak under certain well understood reserves which act as a necessary protection to both parties You are not a lady you are a villager, but somebody has educated you—probably the Church or the local authority—to a point at which you can impose on unobservant and unwary travellers You have had finishing lessons on the telephone which give you a distinguished articulation you can say Th-reee fiv-v-v-e m-n-n-n instead of threee fauv nawn. But you have not acquired any of the reserves You say what you think You announce all the plans that wellbred women conceal You play with your cards on the table instead of keeping them where a lady should keep them up your sleeve

Z Well, wheres the harm?

A Oh, no harm Quite the contrary But

I feel rushed.

z What do you mean? rushed?

A Rushed Precipitated. Carried to lengths I had no intention of going to

z Well, it gets you somewhere: doesn't it?

A. Yes, but where?

z Here There's no mystery about it Here, in a good business in a village shop in a quiet place, with me to keep it straight and look after you

A May I ask how much that expression "looking after me" includes? Let me be clear on the point As a matter of fact I possess a small property which I could sell for enough to purchase an annuity for old Mrs Williams—

z. Ward

A. I believe I have enough to purchase annuities for both Mrs Ward and Mrs Williams, as they are presumably both centenarians But why on earth should I complicate the transaction by marrying you? I could pay you your present wages—

z Salary.

A I beg your pardon. salary You will retain your present position as my shopgirl

z Shop assistant

A I beg your pardon: shop assistant You can then make your own matrimonial arrangements, and leave me to make mine

z Oh, I'll make my own matrimonial arrangements all right enough. You may depend on that.

A Excuse me I added "and leave me to make mine" Can I depend on you for that also?

z Well, we'll see

A [*angrily firm*] No. you will not see

z Well, what?

A. I don't know what I will not commit myself We'll see

z. Just so. we'll see It's a bargain then?

A No: it most certainly is not a bargain When I entered this shop half an hour ago I had not the faintest notion of buying a village shop or marrying a village maiden or any of the things you have put into my head Have you ever read the fable of the spider and the fly?

z No; but I used to sing a song called the honeysuckle and the bee.

A [*resolutely*] Good morning [*He makes for the door*]

z [*following him with the string bag*] You are forgetting your things

A [*taking it*] Thank you.

z Thanks very much.

She tempts him to kiss her.

A No!! [*he strides out*]

THIRD CONVERSATION

A is now the proprietor of the shop with z as his hired assistant The counter has been fitted with a desk at the opposite end to the post-office section. At this A sits writing He wears pepper-and-salt trousers of country cut, with an apron. He is in his shirtsleeves, and looks every inch a shopkeeper. z comes in through the post office, very fresh and matutinal

z. Morning, boss

A Good morning, slave

z I haven't begun slaving yet You have been at it for half an hour. Whatever on earth are you working at so hard?

A I am making out my balance sheet

z Oh, you needn't do that The accountant's clerk from Salisbury does all that when he makes out the income tax return You're not expected to do figures in this village. Fancy old Mrs Ward doing such a thing!

A When I bought this shop from Mrs Ward for an annuity I found she was much cleverer at figures than I was She should have been a moneylender

z She was She lent a shilling for a penny a week

A That must have been between four and five hundred per cent per annum. Shylock would have blushed.

z What's the good of it when you have to give credit at the shop, and then lend the customers the money to pay you?

A Mrs Ward should have gone to Geneva International finance would have come naturally to her

z That's too clever for me Anyhow, you needn't worry over a balance sheet. The accountant will do all that for you

A [*rising and waving the balance sheet proudly as he comes through the counter into the public part of the shop*] This is not an accountant's balance sheet It is a Robinson Crusoe balance sheet

z [*following him*] Whatever's that?

A Crusoe drew up a balance sheet of the advantages and disadvantages of being cast away on a desert island I am cast away in a village on the Wiltshire Downs I am drawing up a similar balance sheet. I propose to read it to you as far as I have got. [*He takes*

one of the customer's chairs] You can remind me of anything I have forgotten

z Lets have it. [*She takes the other chair*]

A I begin with the credit entries

z Things to your own credit, you mean?

A No, to the credit of village shopkeeping as a way of life

z Oh, you are silly, boss

A That is a disrespectful remark As such, it should not be made to a boss by his slave The understanding on which I raised your salary when I engaged you as my assistant was that our relations should be completely conventional and businesslike on your side, however I might occasionally forget myself

z [*rising*] Very well you can keep your balance sheet to yourself I will go on with the telephone call book

A You will do nothing of the sort You will do what I tell you to do That is what I pay you for Sit down again [*She does so*] Now listen [*He takes up his manuscript and reads*] Item I have sharpened my faculties, and greatly improved in observation and mathematics

z Couldnt you put it into shorter words? What does it mean?

A It means that formerly I always took what money was given me without condescending to count it or attempting to calculate it I can now both calculate and count quite rapidly. Formerly I made no distinctions between grades of butter and eggs To me an egg was an egg butter was butter I now make critical distinctions of the greatest subtlety, and value them in terms of money I am forced to admit that the shopkeeper is enormously superior to the Marco Polo man, and that I have learnt more in three months in this shop than I learnt in three years in Oxford

z I cant believe that about the learning But see how your manners have improved!

A My manners!!

z Yes Why, on that ship you hadnt a word to throw to a dog, and if anyone came near you you shrank up into yourself like a hedgehog, afraid that they didnt belong to your class and wanted to speak to you without an introduction Now it's a pleasure to hear you say "Good morning, and what can I do for you today, Mrs Burrell?" and "Have you noticed the cauliflowers today, maam? Not a touch of frost on them!" and "Sparrowgrass very good today, my lady, if you would

be wanting some "

A I positively deny that I have ever in my life called asparagus sparrowgrass to an educated customer Of course, when people are too ignorant to know the names of what they eat, that is another matter

z Well, anyhow, your manners have improved, havnt they?

A I dont know I know that they are no longer disinterested and sincere

z No more they never used to be Never easy with anybody Now you are hail fellow well met, as you might say, with everybody

A The world has become a world of customers Let me write that down [*He pencils on the back of his balance sheet*] "Manners will never be universally good until every person is every other person's customer "

z Youre not a real shopkeeper yet, boss All you want is to find something clever to write

A Well, why not? Find enough clever things to say, and you are a Prime Minister Write them down, and you are a Shakespear

z Yes, but who wants to be a Prime Minister or a Shakespear? Youve got to make a living

A Well, am I not making a living? I am no poorer than when I bought the shop

z But if the money goes as fast as it comes you cant save anything

A I loathe saving It turns human nature sour "Cast your bread upon the waters, and it will return to you after many days "

z And how are you to live for the many days with nothing to eat?

A I dont know One does, somehow Stop asking questions, and let us get on with the balance sheet

z I speak for your good

A [*rising wrathfully*] The most offensive liberty one human being can possibly take with another What business is it of yours?

z [*rising and facing him*] If you wont think for yourself somebody else must think for you It's my business as much as yours

A Oh, indeed! Who does this shop belong to? I mean to whom does this shop belong?

z I get my living out of it, dont I If it shuts up what becomes of me?

A Well, if you come to that, what becomes of me? You can get another job I very greatly doubt whether anyone would give me one [*Calming down*] Can you not be content with the fact that the shop is making enough to

support two people? [*He resumes his seat*]

z Aye, but suppose it had to support three people!

A Why suppose? It hasnt thats all

z Its not all If you marry a stranger there will be three And what about the children?

A The remedy is simple I shall not marry

z You dont know

A Neither do you.

z Yes I do. You have married once, and you will marry twice Somebody will snap you up. You are that sort of man

A If a woman snaps me up she must take the consequences She must assist in the shop And you will get the sack

z Oh, you are tiresome [*She sits down, discouraged*] But you see my point, at all events

A No What point?

z Well, that its really cheaper to keep a wife than to pay an assistant Let alone that you dont have to live a single life

A You can get rid of an assistant if she doesnt suit You cant get rid of a wife

z If people thought that way, theyd never get married

A Precisely

z In this life you have to take chances

A I have taken them, and escaped

z You wont escape here We dont hold with bachelors here

A You cant do without a general shop here, nor a post office While I command both I am in an impregnable strategic position.

z Well, I dont like to say it; but people are beginning to talk

A Beginning! When did they ever stop?

z Oh, theres no use talking to you

A Not the slightest

z Oh well then, take a month's notice [*She rises*]

A A month's notice!

z Yes a month's notice

A A month's notice because I refuse to marry some ridiculous village maiden or illiterate widow with whom I could not hold a moment's conversation!

z Wives are not for conversation thats for visitors. Youve had plenty of conversation with me

A Leave yourself out of this conversation, please.

z Oh, very well A month's notice.

A Dont say that again Utter nonsense. What have you to complain of? You are quite well off here I purposely pay you ten pounds

a year more than you could get anywhere else

z Why?

A What do you mean, why?

z Why do you pay me ten pounds more than you could get another assistant for?

A Heaven only knows!

z [*in a fury*] I'll go this very day I'll go this very minute You can keep my month You dont know when youe well off. Youre selfish I dont wonder your wife died Did she die mad?

A [*gravely*] As a matter of fact, she did. I am one of those unlucky men who draw the black chances in the lottery of marriage

z [*remorsefully*] Oh, I didnt know I didnt indeed I was only joking [*She sits again*] I wouldnt have said it for the world if Id known

A Never mind I know you didnt mean it By the way, I made an inconsiderate remark which hurt you I did not intend that I should have told you seriously that I pay you ten pounds more than the market rate because I value your services in the shop, and wish to offer you every inducement to stay here permanently.

z Ten pounds extra, to stay all my life here as a single woman!

A Not necessarily. You can get married if you wish.

z Who to?

A To whom? Oh, anyone

z Anyone in the village is good enough for me, but nobody in the village is good enough for you: is that it?

A Dont lose your temper again

z I will if I like And if you knew how near I was to putting a couple of extra words in, youd perhaps realize that a woman wants something more in life than a job and a salary.

A I know that perfectly well There is one thing we are all out for when we are young

z. And what is that, pray?

A Trouble, adventure, hardship, care, disappointment, doubt, misery, danger, and death

z Not me, thank you All I want is a husband and the usual consequences

A The same thing Marriage is the village form of all these adventures

z Oh, why dont you take a more cheerful view of life?

A I have learnt not to expect too much from life That is the secret of real cheerfulness, because I am always getting agreeable surprises instead of desolating disappointments

z Well, your second marriage may be an agreeable surprise, maynt it?

A What, exactly, do you mean by my second marriage? I have only been married once I mean I have been married only once

z Well, look here? Straight, now? Is there any man in this village that would be suitable to me now that I have got used to you?

A My dear men are all alike

z You mean it will make no difference to me who I marry

A Very little, I am afraid

z And women are all alike too, arnt they?

A [*suspicious*] What are you getting at?

z If it doesnt matter who anybody marries, then it doesnt matter who I marry and it doesnt matter who you marry

A Whom, not who

z Oh, speak English youre not on the telephone now What I mean is that if it doesnt matter to me it doesnt matter to you either

A You admit, then, that it doesnt matter?

z No I dont It's a lie

A Oh!

z Dont "oh" me All men are not alike to me There are men—and good nice men, too—that I wouldnt let touch me But when I saw you on the ship I said to myself "I could put up with him"

A Not at all You told me just now that you said something quite different I believe you really said something much more rapacious Being rather a futile sort of person I attract vigorous women like you

z When you looked at me out of the corner of your eye—you looked at all the women out of the corner of your eye in spite of your keeping yourself so much to yourself—did you never say "I could put up with her"?

A No I said "Damn that woman she wont stop talking to me and interrupting my work"

z Well, I tell you we were made for one-another It maynt be as plain to you as to me yet, but if it's plain to me there must be something in it, for I'm never wrong when I see a thing quite plain I dont believe youd ever have bought this shop and given up

being a gentleman if I hadnt been here

A Now that you mention it I believe that is true You were one of the amenities of the estate

z Well, I might be one of the amenities of the estate of holy matrimony, mightnt I?

A Take care You may find what you are trying to do easier than you think About five per cent of the human race consists of positive masterful acquisitive people like you, obsessed with some passion which they must gratify at all hazards The rest let them have their own way because they have neither the strength nor the courage to resist, or because the things the masterful ones want seem trifling beside the starry heavens and the destiny of Man I am not one of the masterful ones I am not worth marrying Any woman could marry me if she took trouble enough

z Thats just what I'm afraid of If I let you out of my sight for a month I might find you married to someone else at the end of it Well, I'm taking no chances I dont set up to be masterful I dont like selfish uppish domineering people any more than you do, but I must and will have you, and thats all about it

A Well, you already have me—as an employer And you are independent of me, and can leave me if you are not satisfied

z How can I be satisfied when I cant lay my hands on you? I work for you like a slave for a month on end, and I would have to work harder as your wife than I do now, but there come times when I want to get hold of you in my arms, every bit of you, and when I do I'll give you something better to think about than the starry heavens, as you call them Youll find that you have senses to gratify as well as fine things to say

A Senses! You dont know what youre talking about Look around you Here in this shop I have everything that can gratify the senses apples, onions, and acid drops pepper and mustard, cosy comforters and hot water bottles Through the window I delight my eyes with the old church and market place, built in the days when beauty came naturally from the hands of mediæval craftsmen My ears are filled with delightful sounds, from the cooing of doves and the humming of bees to the wireless echoes of Beethoven and Elgar My nose can gloat over our sack of fresh lavender or our special sixpenny Eau

de Cologne when the smell of rain on dry earth is denied me. My senses are saturated with satisfactions of all sorts. But when I am full to the neck with onions and acid drops; when I am so fed up with mediæval architecture that I had rather die than look at another cathedral, when all I desire is rest from sensation, not more of it, what use will my senses be to me if the starry heavens still seem no more than a senseless avalanche of lumps of stone and wisps of gas—if the destiny of Man holds out no higher hope to him than the final extinction and annihilation of so mischievous and miserable a creature?

z We dont bother about all that in the village

A Yes you do. Our best seller here is Old Moore's Almanack, and next to it comes Napoleon's Book of Fate. Old Mrs Ward would never have sold the shop to me if she had not become persuaded that the Day of Judgment is fixed for the seventh of August next.

z I dont believe such nonsense. Whats it all got to do with you and me?

A You are inexperienced. You dont know. You are the dupe of thoughtless words like sensuality, sensuousness, and all the rest of the twaddle of the Materialists. I am not a Materialist. I am a poet, and I know that to be in your arms will not gratify my senses at all. As a matter of mere physical sensation you will find the bodily contacts to which you are looking forward neither convenient nor decorous.

z. Oh, dont talk like that. You mustnt let yourself think about it like that.

A. You must always let yourself think about everything. And you must think about everything as it is, not as it is talked about. Your secondhand gabble about gratifying my senses is only your virgin innocence. We shall get quite away from the world of sense. We shall light up for one another a lamp in the holy of holes in the temple of life, and the lamp will make its veil transparent. Aimless lumps of stone blundering through space will become stars singing in their spheres. Our dull purposeless village existence will become one irresistible purpose and nothing else. An extraordinary delight and an intense love will seize us. It will last hardly longer than the lightning flash which turns the black night into infinite radiance. It will be dark

again before you can clear the light out of your eyes, but you will have seen; and for ever after you will think about what you have seen and not gabble catchwords invented by the wasted virgins that walk in darkness. It is to give ourselves this magic moment that we feel that we must and shall hold one another in our arms; and when the moment comes, the world of the senses will vanish; and for us there will be nothing ridiculous, nothing uncomfortable, nothing unclean, nothing but pure paradise.

z Well, I am glad you take a nice view of it; for now I come to think of it I never could bear to be nothing more to a man than a lollipop. But you mustnt expect too much.

A I shall expect more than you have ever dreamt of giving, in spite of the boundless audacity of women. What great men would ever have been married if the female nobodies who snapped them up had known the enormity of their own presumption? I believe they all thought they were going to refine, to educate, to make real gentlemen of their husbands. What do you intend to make of me, I wonder?

z Well, I have made a decent shopkeeper of you already, havnt I? But you neednt be afraid of my not appreciating you. I want a fancy sort of husband, not a common villager that any woman could pick up. I shall be proud of you. And now Ive nailed you, I wonder at my own nerve.

A. So do I.

z I'm not a bit like that, you know, really. Something above me and beyond me drove me on. Thats why I know it will be all right. Dont be afraid. I cant make a fine speech about it like you; but it will be all right. I promise you that.

A Very well. Go round to the rectory; and put up the banns. And tell the rector's wife that we got in some prime artichokes this morning. She's fond of artichokes.

z You are sure you feel happy about it?

A I dont know what I feel about it. Go and do as you are told; and dont ask ridiculous questions.

The telephone rings. She hastens to answer it.

z Number, please? . . . Oh, an order. Thanks very much. . . Yes, we have some very fine artichokes just in this morning. . . Thanks very much, they shall be sent round directly. Oh, and theres something else—are you there? . . . Sorry to detain you: could I

speak to the rector? Yes it's rather particular It's about banns banns BANNS b for beauty, a for audacity, two enns for nonsense, and s for singing . Yes, banns thats right. Who are the what? Oh,

the parties! Of course Well, it's—

The curtain falls

In the Sunda Strait,
 27th January 1933

XLII

ON THE ROCKS

A POLITICAL COMEDY

ACT I

The Cabinet Room in number ten Downing Street, Westminster, the official residence of the British Prime Minister The illustrious holder of that office, Sir Arthur Chavender, is reading The Times on the hearth under the portrait of Walpole The fireplace wall is covered with bookshelves, but one bit of it, on Walpole's right, is a masked door, painted with sham books and shelves, leading to the Minister's private apartments, and in the end of the same wall, on Walpole's left, is a door leading to the office of Sir Arthur's private secretary Miss Hilda Hanways The main door is in the side wall on Walpole's right In the opposite wall on his left are the spacious windows Everything is on an imposing scale, including an oblong table across the middle of the room, with fourteen leather upholstered chairs, six at each side and one at each end, pushed in all along it The presidential chair is the central one next the cold fireplace (it is mid-July), and there is a telephone and a switchboard on the table within reach of it Sir Arthur has pulled it round and is making himself comfortable in it as he reads At the end of the table nearest the window a silver tray, with coffee and milk for one person, indicates Sir Arthur's unofficial seat In the corner farthest from Walpole, on his right, is a writing bureau and chair for the secretary In the corresponding corner on his left, an armchair There is a bluebook lying, neglected and dusty, on a half empty shelf of the bookcase within reach of the Prime Minister's seat

Sir Arthur can hardly be much less than fifty, but his natural buoyancy makes him look younger, He has an orator's voice of pleasant tone, and his manners are very genial In oldish clothes he has the proper aristocratic air of being carelessly but well dressed, an easy feat for him, as he is so trimly built that any clothes would look well cut on him On the whole, a very engaging personality

He reads The Times until his secretary hurries in from her office, with her notebook and a sheaf of letters in her hand Her age is unknown, but she is made up to pass as reasonably young and attractive She looks capable, but she does not carry the burden of State affairs as easily as the Prime Minister Both are worried, but with a difference She is worried not only by an excess of business but a sense of responsibility He is equally worried by the excess of business, but in him enjoyment of his position leaves no doubt in his mind as to his own entire adequacy to it

HILDA I hear you have been asking for me, Sir Arthur I'm so sorry to be late, but really the streets are becoming quite impassable with the crowds of unemployed I took a taxi, but it was no use we were blocked by a procession, and I had to get out and push my way through [*She goes to her bureau*]

SIR ARTHUR [*rising*] What on earth good do they think they can do themselves by crowding aimlessly about Westminster and the public offices?

HILDA Thank Goodness the police wont let them into Downing Street [*She sits down*] They would be all over the doorstep

SIR ARTHUR It's all so foolish—so ignorant, poor chaps! [*He throws The Times on the table and moves to the end chair, where his coffee is*] They think because I'm Prime Minister I'm Divine Providence and can find jobs for them before trade revives [*He sits down and fidgets with his papers*]

HILDA Trafalgar Square's full The Horse Guards parade is full The Mall is full all the way down to Marlborough House and Buckingham Palace

SIR ARTHUR They have no right to be there Trafalgar Square is not a public place it belongs to the Commissioner of Woods and Forests. The Horse Guards parade is reserved

for the military The Mall is a thoroughfare: anyone stopping there is guilty of obstruction What are the police thinking of? Why dont they clear them out?

HILDA I asked the policeman who got me through to the gates why they didnt He said "We're only too glad to have them where they cant break any windows, and where the mounted men can have a fair whack at the Hooligan Fringe when they get too obstreperous "

SIR ARTHUR Hooligan Fringe! He got that out of the papers It only encourages them to write them up like that.

HILDA Sir Broadfoot Basham has come over from Scotland Yard He is talking to Lady Chavender.

SIR ARTHUR [*rising and making for the telephone*] Yes I telephoned for him He really must do something to stop these meetings It was a mistake to make a man with a name like that Chief Commissioner of Police People think him a trampling, bashing, brutal terrorist no matter how considerately the police behave. What we need is a thoroughly popular figure [*He takes up the telephone*] Ask Sir Broadfoot Basham to come up.

HILDA I dont think any chief of police could be popular at present. Every day they are bludgeoning deputations of the unemployed. [*She sits down and busies herself with letters*]

SIR ARTHUR Poor devils! I hate that part of the business But what are the police to do? We cant have the sittings of the local authorities threatened by deputations Deputations are frightful nuisances even in the quietest times; but just now they are a public danger.

The Chief Commissioner of Police enters by the main door A capable looking man from the military point of view He is a gentleman and his manners are fairly pleasant; but they are not in the least conciliatory

Hilda rises and pulls out a chair for him at the end of the table nearest to her and farthest from Sir Arthur; then returns to her work at her desk. Sir Arthur comes round to his side of the table.

SIR ARTHUR Morning, Basham Sit down. I'm devilishly busy, but you are always welcome to your ten minutes

BASHAM [*coolly, sitting down*] Thank you You sent for me [*Anxiously*] Anything new?

SIR ARTHUR These street corner meetings are going beyond all bounds.

BASHAM [*relieved*] What harm do they do? Crowds are dangerous when theyve nothing to listen to or look at. The meetings keep them amused They save us trouble.

SIR ARTHUR Thats all very well for you, Basham, but think of the trouble they make for me! Remember this is a National Government, not a party one. I am up against my Conservative colleagues all the time; and they cant swallow the rank sedition that goes on every day at these meetings Sir Dexter Rightside—you know what a regular old Die-hard he is—heard a speaker say that if the police used tear gas the unemployed would give old Dexy something to cry for without any tear gas. That has brought matters to a head in the Cabinet We shall make an Order in Council to enable you to put a stop to all street meetings and speeches

BASHAM [*unimpressed—slowly*] If you dont mind, P M, I had rather you didnt do that

SIR ARTHUR Why not?

BASHAM Crowd psychology.

SIR ARTHUR Nonsense! Really, Basham, if you are going to come this metaphysical rot over me I shall begin to wonder whether your appointment wasnt a mistake.

BASHAM. Of course it was a mistake. Dealing with the unemployed is not a soldier's job; and I was a soldier. If you want these crowds settled on soldierly lines, say so; and give me half a dozen machine guns The streets will be clear before twelve o'clock

SIR ARTHUR Man have you considered the effect on the bye-elections?

BASHAM. A soldier has nothing to do with elections You shew me a crowd and tell me to disperse it All youll hear is a noise like a watchman's rattle Quite simple.

SIR ARTHUR Far too simple. You soldiers never understand the difficulties a statesman has to contend with.

BASHAM Well, whats your alternative?

SIR ARTHUR I have told you. Arrest the sedition mongers That will shut old Dexy's mouth.

BASHAM. So that Satan may find mischief still for idle hands to do. No, P M.: the right alternative is mine: keep the crowd amused. You ought to know that, I think, better than most men

SIR ARTHUR. I! What do you mean?

BASHAM. The point is to prevent the crowd doing anything, isnt it?

SIR ARTHUR. Anything mischievous. I sup-

pose so But—

BASHAM An English crowd will never do anything, mischievous or the reverse, while it is listening to speeches And the fellows who make the speeches can be depended on never to do anything else In the first place, they dont know how In the second, they are afraid I am instructing my agents to press all the talking societies, the Ethical Societies, the Socialist societies, the Communists, the Fascists, the Anarchists, the Syndicalists, the official Labor Party, the Independent Labor Party, the Salvation Army, the Church Army and the Atheists, to send their best tub-thumpers into the streets to seize the opportunity

SIR ARTHUR What opportunity?

BASHAM They dont know Neither do I It's only a phrase that means nothing just what they are sure to rise at I must keep Trafalgar Square going night and day A few Labor M.P.s would help You have a rare lot of gas-bags under your thumb in the House If you could send half a dozen of them down to the Yard, I could plant them where they would be really useful

SIR ARTHUR [*incensed*] Basham I must tell you that we are quite determined to put a stop to this modern fashion of speaking disrespectfully of the House of Commons If it goes too far we shall not hesitate to bring prominent offenders to the bar of the House, no matter what their position is

BASHAM Arthur as responsible head of the police, I am up against the facts all day and every day, and one of the facts is that nowadays nobody outside the party chiques cares a brass button for the House of Commons [*Rising*] You will do what I ask you as to letting the speaking go on, wont you?

SIR ARTHUR Well, I—er—

BASHAM Unless you are game to try the machine guns

SIR ARTHUR Oh do drop that, Basham [*he returns to his chair and sits moodily*]

BASHAM Right! We'll let them talk. Thanks ever so much Sorry to have taken up so much of your time I know it's priceless [*He hurries to the door, then hesitates and adds*] By the way, I know it's asking a lot, but if you could give us a turn in Trafalgar Square yourself—some Sunday afternoon would be best—it—

SIR ARTHUR [*springing up, thoroughly roused*]
I!!!

BASHAM [*hurriedly*] No of course you

couldnt Only, it would do such a lot of good —keep the crowd quiet talking about it for a fortnight However, of course it's impossible say no more so long [*He goes out*]

SIR ARTHUR [*collapsing into his chair*] Well, really! Basham's losing his head I wonder what he meant by saying that I ought to know better than most men What ought I to know better than most men?

HILDA I think he meant that you are such a wonderful speaker you ought to know what a magical effect a fine speech has on a crowd

SIR ARTHUR [*musng*] Do you know, I am not at all sure that there is not something in his idea of my making a speech in Trafalgar Square I have not done such a thing for many many years, but I have stood between the lions in my time, and I believe that if I were to tackle the unemployed face to face, and explain to them that I intend to call a conference in March next on the prospects of a revival of trade, it would have a wonderfully soothing effect

HILDA But it's impossible You have a conference every month until November And think of the time taken by the travelling! One in Paris! Two in Geneva! One in Japan! You cant possibly do it you will break down

SIR ARTHUR And shall I be any better at home here leading the House? sitting up all night in bad air listening to fools insulting me? I tell you I should have been dead long ago but for the relief of these conferences the journeys and the change And I look forward to Japan I shall be able to pick up some nice old bric-a-brac there

HILDA Oh well! You know best

SIR ARTHUR [*energetically*] And now to work. Work! work! work! [*He rises and paces the floor in front of the table*] I want you to take down some notes for my speech this afternoon at the Church House The Archbishop tells me that the Anglo-Catholics are going mad on what they call Christian Communism, and that I must head them off

HILDA There are those old notes on the economic difficulties of Socialism that you used at the British Association last year

SIR ARTHUR No. these parsons know too much about that Besides, this is not the time to talk about economic difficulties we're up to the neck in them The Archbishop says "Avoid figures, and stick to the fact that Socialism would break up the family" I believe he is right a bit of sentiment about the

family always goes down well Just jot this down for me [*Dictating*] Family. Foundation of civilization Foundation of the empire.

HILDA. Will there be any Hindus or Mahometans present?

SIR ARTHUR. No. No polygamists at the Church House. Besides, everybody knows that The Fámily means the British family By the way, I can make a point of that Put down in a separate line, in red capitals, "One man one wife." Let me see now. can I work that up? "One child one father." How would that do?

HILDA I think it would be safer to say "One child one mother "

SIR ARTHUR No that might get a laugh—the wrong sort of laugh. I'd better not risk it Strike it out A laugh in the wrong place in the Church House would be the very devil Where did you get that necklace? it's rather pretty I havnt seen it before.

HILDA Ive worn it every day for two months. [*Striking out the "one child" note*] Yes?

SIR ARTHUR. Then—er—what subject are we on? [*Testily*] I wish you wouldnt interrupt me I had the whole speech in my head beautifully; and now it's gone.

HILDA Sorry The family

SIR ARTHUR The family? Whose family? What family? The Holy Family? The Royal Family? The Swiss Family Robinson? Do be a little more explicit, Miss Hanways.

HILDA [*gently insistent*] Not any particular family. THE family Socialism breaking up the family For the Church House speech this afternoon

SIR ARTHUR Yes yes yes, of course I was in the House yesterday until three in the morning; and my brains are just so much tripe.

HILDA. Why did you sit up? The business didnt matter

SIR ARTHUR [*scandalized*] Not matter! You really must not say these things, Miss Hanways A full dress debate on whether Jameson or Thompson was right about what Johnson said in the Cabinet!

HILDA Ten years ago.

SIR ARTHUR What does that matter? The real question: the question whether Jameson or Thompson is a liar, is a vital question of the first importance.

HILDA But theyre both liars

SIR ARTHUR Of course they are; but the division might have affected their inclusion

in the next Cabinet The whole House rose at it Look at the papers this morning! Full of it

HILDA And three lines about the unemployed, though I was twenty minutes late trying to shove my way through them Really, Sir Arthur, you should have come home to bed. You will kill yourself if you try to get through your work and attend so many debates as well. you will indeed

SIR ARTHUR Miss Hanways I wish I could persuade you to remember occasionally that I happen to be the leader of the House of Commons

HILDA Oh, what is the use of leading the House if it never goes anywhere? It just breaks my heart to see the state you come home in. You are good for nothing next morning.

SIR ARTHUR [*yelling at her*] Dont remind me of it do you think I dont know? My brain is overworked my mental grasp is stretched and strained to breaking point I shall go mad [*Pulling himself together*] However, it's no use grouching about it I shall have a night off going to Geneva, and a weekend at Chequers But it is hard to govern a country and do fifty thousand other things every day that might just as well be done by the Beadle of Burlington Arcade Well, well, we mustnt waste time Work! work! work! [*He returns to his chair and sits down resolutely*] Get along with it What were we talking about?

HILDA. The family.

SIR ARTHUR [*grasping his temples distractedly*] Oh dear! Has Lady Chavender's sister-in-law been making a fuss again?

HILDA No, no. The family. Not any real family THE family Socialism breaking up the family Your speech this afternoon at the Church House

SIR ARTHUR Ah, of course. I am going dotty. Thirty years in Parliament and ten on the Front Bench would drive any man dotty I have only one set of brains and I need ten. I—

HILDA [*urgently*] We must get on with the notes for your speech, Sir Arthur The morning has half gone already, and weve done nothing

SIR ARTHUR [*again infuriated*] How can the busiest man in England find time to do anything? It is you who have wasted the morning interrupting me with your silly remarks about your necklace What do I care about

your necklace?

HILDA You gave it to me, Sir Arthur

SIR ARTHUR Did I? Ha ha ha! Yes I believe I did I bought it in Venice But come along now What about that speech?

HILDA Yes The family It was about the family

SIR ARTHUR Well, I know that I have not yet become a complete idiot You keep saying the family, the family, the family

HILDA Socialism and the family How Socialism will break up the family

SIR ARTHUR Who says Socialism will break up the family? Dont be a fool

HILDA The Archbishop wants you to say it. At the Church House

SIR ARTHUR Decidedly I am going mad

HILDA No you are only tired You were getting along all right One man one wife that is where you stopped.

SIR ARTHUR One man one wife is one wife too many, if she has a lot of brothers who cant get on with the women they marry Has it occurred to you, Miss Hanways, that the prospect of Socialism destroying the family may not be altogether unattractive?

HILDA [*despairingly*] Oh, Sir Arthur, we must get on with the notes we really must I have all the letters to do yet Do try to pick up the thread. The family the foundation of the empire The foundation of Christianity Of civilization. Of human society

SIR ARTHUR Thats enough about the foundation it wont bear any more I must have another word to work up Let me see I have it. Nationalization of women.

HILDA [*remonstrating*] Oh, Sir Arthur!

SIR ARTHUR Whats the matter now?

HILDA Such bunk!

SIR ARTHUR Miss Hanways when a statesman is not talking bunk he is making trouble for himself, and Goodness knows I have trouble enough without making any more Put this down. [*He rises and takes his platform attitude at the end of the table*] "No, your Grace, my lords and gentlemen Nationalize the land if you will, nationalize our industries if we must, nationalize education, housing, science, art, the theatre, the opera, even the cinema, but spare our women"

HILDA [*having taken it down*] Is that the finish?

SIR ARTHUR [*abandoning the attitude and pacing about*] No write in red capitals under it "Rock of Ages"

HILDA I think Rock of Ages will be rather a shock unless in connexion with something very sincere May I suggest "The Church's One Foundation"?

SIR ARTHUR Yes Much better Thank you The family the Church's one foundation Splendid.

MISS FLAVIA Chavender, 19, bursts violently into the room through the masked door and dashes to her father

FLAVIA Papa I will not stand Mamma any longer She interferes with me in every possible way out of sheer dislike of me I refuse to live in this house with her a moment longer

Lady Chavender follows her in, speaking as she enters, and comes between the Prime Minister and his assailant

LADY CHAVENDER I knew you were coming here to make a scene and disturb your father, though he has had hardly six hours sleep this week, and was up all night I am so sorry, Arthur she is uncontrollable

David Chavender, 18, slight, refined, rather small for his age, charges in to the table

DAVID [*in a childish falsetto*] Look here, Mamma Cant you let Flavia alone? I wont stand by and see her nagged at and treated like a child of six Nag! nag! nag! everything she does

LADY CHAVENDER Nag!! I control myself to the limit of human endurance with you all But Flavia makes a study of annoying me

FLAVIA Its not true I have considered you and given up all the things I wanted for you until I have no individuality left If I take up a book you want me to read something else If I want to see anybody you want me to see somebody else If I choose the color of my own dress you want something different and dowdy I cant sit right nor stand right nor do my hair right nor dress myself right my life here is a hell

LADY CHAVENDER Flavia!!

FLAVIA [*passionately*] Yes, hell.

DAVID Quite true [*Fortissimo*] Hell

LADY CHAVENDER [*quietly*] Miss Hanways would you mind—

HILDA Yes, Lady Chavender [*she rises to go*]

FLAVIA You neednt go, Hilda, You know what I have to endure

DAVID Damn all this paralyzing delicacy! Damn it!

LADY CHAVENDER Arthur—

SIR ARTHUR [*patting her*] Never mind, dear. They must be let talk. [*He returns placidly to his chair*] It's just like the House of Commons except that the speeches are shorter.

FLAVIA Oh, it's no use trying to make papa listen to anything [*She throws herself despairingly into Basham's chair and writhes*]

DAVID [*approaching Sir Arthur with dignity*] I really think, father, you might for once in a way take some slight interest in the family

SIR ARTHUR My dear boy, at this very moment I am making notes for a speech on the family Ask Miss Hanways

HILDA Yes Mr Chavender Sir Arthur is to speak this afternoon on the disintegrating effect of Socialism on family life

FLAVIA [*irresistible amusement struggling with hysterics and getting the better of them*] Ha ha! Ha ha ha!

DAVID [*retreating*] Ha ha! Haw! That's the best—ha ha ha!

SIR ARTHUR. I don't see the joke Why this hilarity?

DAVID Treat the House to a brief description of this family, and you will get the laugh of your life

FLAVIA Damn the family!

LADY CHAVENDER Flavia!

FLAVIA [*bouncing up*] Yes there you go I mustn't say damn I mustn't say anything I feel and think, only what you feel and think. That's family life Scold, scold, scold!

DAVID Squabble, squabble, squabble!

FLAVIA Look at the unbearable way you treat me! Look at the unbearable way you treat Papa!

SIR ARTHUR [*rising in flaming wrath*] How dare you? Silence. Leave the room.

After a moment of avestruck silence Flavia, rather dazed by the avalanche she has brought down on herself, looks at her father in a lost way, then bursts into tears and runs out through the masked door

SIR ARTHUR [*quietly*] You'd better go too, my boy

David, also somewhat dazed, shrugs his shoulders and goes out Sir Arthur looks at Hilda She hurries out almost on tiptoe

SIR ARTHUR [*taking his wife in his arms affectionately*] Treat me badly! You! I could have killed her, poor little devil

He sits down, and she passes behind him and takes the nearest chair on his right.

She is a nice woman, and goodlooking; but she is bored; and her habitual manner is one of

apology for being not only unable to take an interest in people, but even to pretend that she does

LADY CHAVENDER It serves us right, dear, for letting them bring themselves up in the post-war fashion instead of teaching them to be ladies and gentlemen Besides, Flavia was right I do treat you abominably And you are so good!

SIR ARTHUR Nonsense! Such a horrid wicked thing to say Don't you know, my love, that you are the best of wives? the very best as well as the very dearest?

LADY CHAVENDER You are certainly the best of husbands, Arthur You are the best of everything I don't wonder at the country adoring you But Flavia was quite right It is the first time I have ever known her to be right about anything. I am a bad wife and a bad mother I dislike my daughter and treat her badly I like you very much, and I treat you abominably.

SIR ARTHUR. No, no

LADY CHAVENDER Yes, yes. I suppose it's something wrong in my constitution I was not born for wifing and mothering And yet I am very very fond of you, as you know. But I have a grudge against your career

SIR ARTHUR My career! [*Complacently*] Well, there's not much wrong with that, is there? Of course, I know it keeps me too much away from home That gives you a sort of grudge against it. All the wives of successful men are a bit like that But it's better to see too little of a husband than too much of him, isn't it?

LADY CHAVENDER I am so glad that you really feel successful

SIR ARTHUR Well, it may sound conceited and all that, but after all a man can't be Prime Minister and go about with a modest cough pretending to be a nobody. Facts are facts, and the facts in my case are that I have climbed to the top of the tree; I am happy in my work, and—

LADY CHAVENDER Your what?

SIR ARTHUR You are getting frightfully deaf, dear I said "my work"

LADY CHAVENDER You call it work?

SIR ARTHUR Brain work, dear, brain work. Do you really suppose that governing the country is not work, but a sort of gentlemanly diversion?

LADY CHAVENDER But you don't govern the country, Arthur The country isn't governed: it just slummocks along anyhow

SIR ARTHUR I have to govern within democratic limits I cannot go faster than our voters will let me

LADY CHAVENDER Oh, your voters! What do they know about government? Football, prizefighting, war that is what they like And they like war because it isn't real to them it's only a cinema show War is real to me, and I hate it, as every woman to whom it is real hates it But to you it is only part of your game one of the regular moves of the Foreign Office and the War Office

SIR ARTHUR My dear, I hate war as much as you do It makes a Prime Minister's job easy because it brings every dog to heel, but it produces coalitions, and I believe in party government

LADY CHAVENDER [*rising*] Oh, it's no use talking to you, Arthur [*She comes behind him and plants her hands on his shoulders*] You are a dear and a duck and a darling, but you live in fairyland and I live in the hard wicked world That's why I can't be a good wife and take an interest in your career

SIR ARTHUR Stuff! Politics are not a woman's business that's all it means Thank God I have not a political wife Look at Higginbotham! He was just ripe for the Cabinet when his wife went into Parliament and made money by journalism That was the end of him

LADY CHAVENDER And I married a man with a hopelessly parliamentary mind, and that was the end of me

SIR ARTHUR Yes, yes, my pettums I know that you have sacrificed yourself to keeping my house and sewing on my buttons, and I am not ungrateful I am sometimes remorseful, but I love it And now you must run away, I am very very very busy this morning

LADY CHAVENDER Yes, yes, very very busy doing nothing And it wears you out far more than if your mind had something sensible to work on! You'll have a nervous breakdown if you go on like this Promise me that you will see the lady I spoke to you about—if you won't see a proper doctor

SIR ARTHUR But you told me this woman is a doctor! [*Herises and breaks away from her*] Once for all, I won't see any doctor I'm old enough to do my own doctoring, and I'm not going to pay any doctor, male or female, three guineas to tell me what I know perfectly well already that my brain's over-

worked and I must take a fortnight off on the links, or go for a sea voyage

LADY CHAVENDER She charges twenty guineas, Arthur

SIR ARTHUR [*shaken*] Oh! Does she? What for?

LADY CHAVENDER Twenty guineas for the diagnosis and twelve guineas a week at her sanatorium in the Welsh mountains, where she wants to keep you under observation for six weeks. That would really rest you, and I think you would find her a rather interesting and attractive woman

SIR ARTHUR Has she a good cook?

LADY CHAVENDER I don't think that matters

SIR ARTHUR Not matter!

LADY CHAVENDER No She makes her patients fast

SIR ARTHUR Tell her I'm not a Mahatma If I pay twelve guineas a week I shall expect three meals a day for it

LADY CHAVENDER Then you will see her?

SIR ARTHUR Certainly not, if I have to pay twenty guineas for it

LADY CHAVENDER No, no Only a social call, not a professional visit Just to amuse you, and gratify her curiosity She wants to meet you

SIR ARTHUR Very well, dear, very well, very well This woman has got round you, I see Well, she shan't get round me, but to please you I'll have a look at her And now you really must run away I have a frightful mass of work to get through this morning

LADY CHAVENDER Thank you, darling [*She kisses him*] May I tell Flavia she is forgiven?

SIR ARTHUR Yes But I haven't really forgiven her I'll never forgive her

LADY CHAVENDER [*smiling*] Dearest. [*She kisses his fingers and goes out, giving him a parting smile as she goes through the masked door*]

Sir Arthur, left alone, looks inspired and triumphant He addresses an imaginary assembly

SIR ARTHUR "My lords and gentlemen you are not theorists You are not rhapsodists You are no longer young"—no, damn it, old Middlesex won't like that "We have all been young We have seen visions and dreamt dreams We have cherished hopes and striven towards ideals We have aspired to things that have not been realized But we are now settled experienced men, family men We are husbands and fathers Yes, my lords and gentlemen husbands and fathers And I ven-

ture to claim your unanimous consent when I affirm that we have found something in these realities that was missing in the ideals I thank you for that burst of applause. which I well know is no mere tribute to my poor eloquence, but the spontaneous and irresistible recognition of the great natural truth that our friends the Socialists have left out of their fancy pictures of a mass society in which regulation is to take the place of emotion and economics of honest human passion." Whew! that took a long breath. "They never will, gentlemen, I say they never will They will NOT [*he smites the table and pauses, glaring round at his imaginary hearers*] I see that we are of one mind, my lords and gentlemen. I need not labor the point " Then labor it for the next ten minutes That will do That will do [*He sits down, rings the telephone bell, and seizes the milk jug, which he empties at a single draught*]

Hilda appears at the main door

HILDA Did you say you would receive a deputation from the Isle of Cats this morning? I have no note of it

SIR ARTHUR. Oh, confound it, I believe I did I totally forgot it

HILDA. They've come

SIR ARTHUR Bother them!

HILDA By all means But how am I to get rid of them? What am I to say?

SIR ARTHUR [*resignedly*] Oh, I suppose I must see them Why do I do these foolish things? Tell Burton to shew them in

HILDA Burton is in his shirt sleeves doing something to the refrigerator I'd better introduce them

SIR ARTHUR Oh, bundle them in anyhow And tell them I am frightfully busy.

She goes out, closing the door softly behind her He pushes away the breakfast tray and covers it with The Times, which he opens out to its fullest extent for that purpose Then he collects his papers into the vacant space, and takes up a big blue one, in the study of which he immerses himself profoundly

HILDA [*flinging the door open*] The worshipful the Mayor of the Isle of Cats.

The Mayor, thick and elderly, enters, a little shyly, followed by (a) an unladylike but brilliant and very confident young woman in smart factory-made clothes after the latest Parisian models, (b) a powerfully built loud voiced young man fresh from Oxford University, defying convention in corduroys, pullover, and unshaven black

beard, (c) a thin, undersized lower middle class young man in an alderman's gown, evidently with a good conceit of himself, and (d) a sunny comfortable old chap in his Sunday best, who might be anything from a working man with a very sedentary job (say a watchman) to a city missionary of humble extraction He is aggressively modest, or pretends to be, and comes in last with a disarming smile rather as a poor follower of the deputation than as presuming to form part of it They group themselves at the door behind the Mayor, who is wearing his chain of office

SIR ARTHUR [*starting from his preoccupation with important State documents, and advancing past the fireplace to greet the Mayor with charming affability*] What! My old friend Tom Humphries! How have you been all these years? Sit down. [*They shake hands, whilst Hilda deftly pulls out a chair from the end of the table nearest the door*]

The Mayor sits down, rather overwhelmed by the cordiality of his reception

SIR ARTHUR [*continuing*] Well, well! fancy your being Mayor of—of—

HILDA [*prompting*] The Isle of Cats.

THE YOUNG WOMAN [*brightly, helping her out*] Down the river, Sir Arthur. Twenty minutes from your door by Underground

THE OXFORD YOUTH [*discordantly*] Oh, he knows as well as you do, Aloysia [*He advances offensively on Sir Arthur, who declines the proximity by retreating a step or two somewhat haughtily*] Stow all this fo bunnun business, Chavender

SIR ARTHUR. This what??

OXFORD YOUTH Oh, chuck it You know French as well as I do

SIR ARTHUR Oh, faux bonhomme, of course, yes [*Looking him up and down*] I see by your costume that you represent the upper classes in the Isle of Cats

OXFORD YOUTH There are no upper classes in the Isle of Cats

SIR ARTHUR. In that case, since it is agreed that there is to be no fo bunnun nonsense between us, may I ask what the dickens you are doing here?

OXFORD YOUTH I am not here to bandy personalities Whatever the accident of birth and the humbug of rank may have made me I am here as a delegate from the Borough Council and an elected representative of the riverside proletariat

SIR ARTHUR [*suddenly pulling out a chair*

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

from the middle of the table—peremptorily] Sit down Dont break the chair [*The Youth scowls at him and flings himself into the chair like a falling tree*] You are all most welcome Perhaps, Tom, you will introduce your young friends

THE MAYOR [*introducing*] Alderwoman Aloysia Brollikins

SIR ARTHUR [*effusively shaking her hand*] How do you do, Miss Brollikins? [*He pulls out a chair for her on the Oxford Youth's right*]

ALOYSIA Nicely, thank you Pleased to meet you, Sir Arthur [*She sits*]

THE MAYOR Alderman Blee

SIR ARTHUR [*with flattering gravity, pressing his hand*] Ah, we have all heard of you, Mr Blee Will you sit here? [*He indicates the presidential chair on the Oxford Youth's left*]

BLEE. Thank you I do my best [*He sits*]

THE MAYOR Viscount Barking

SIR ARTHUR [*triumphantly*] Ah! I thought so A red Communist what!

OXFORD YOUTH Red as blood Same red as the people's

SIR ARTHUR How did you get the blue out of it? The Barkings came over with the Conqueror

OXFORD YOUTH [*rising*] Look here The unemployed are starving Is this a time for persiflage?

SIR ARTHUR Camouflage, my lad, camouflage Do you expect me to take you seriously in that get-up?

OXFORD YOUTH [*hotly*] I shall wear what I damn well please I—

ALOYSIA Shut up, Toffy You promised to behave yourself Sit down, and lets get to business

BARKING [*subsides into his chair with a grunt of disgust*!]

SIR ARTHUR [*looking rather doubtfully at the old man, who is still standing*] Is this gentleman a member of your deputation?

THE MAYOR Mr Hipney Old and tried friend of the working class

OXFORD YOUTH Old Hipney Why dont you call him by the name the East End knows him by? Old Hipney Good old Hipney

OLD HIPNEY [*slipping noiselessly into the secretary's chair at the bureau*] Dont mind me, Sir Arthur I dont matter

SIR ARTHUR At such a crisis as the present, Mr Hipney, every public-spirited man matters Delighted to meet you [*He returns to his*

own chair and surveys them now that they are all seated, whilst Hilda slips discreetly out into her office] And now, what can I do for you, Miss Brollikins? What can I do for you, gentlemen?

THE MAYOR [*slowly*] Well, Sir Arthur, as far as I can make it out the difficulty seems to be that you cant do anything But something's got to be done

SIR ARTHUR [*stiffening suddenly*] May I ask why, if everything that is possible has already been done?

THE MAYOR Well, the unemployed are—well, unemployed, you know

SIR ARTHUR We have provided for the unemployed That provision has cost us great sacrifices, but we have made the sacrifices without complaining

THE OXFORD YOUTH [*scornfully*] Sacrifices! What sacrifices? Are you starving? Have you pawned your overcoat? Are you sleeping ten

in a room?

SIR ARTHUR The noble lord enquires—

OXFORD YOUTH [*furiously*] Dont noble lord me you are only doing it to rattle me Well, you cant rattle me But it makes me sick to see you rolling in luxury and think of what these poor chaps and their women folk are suffering

SIR ARTHUR I am not rolling, Toffy—I think that is what Miss Brollikins called you [*To Aloysia*] Toffy is a diminutive of Toff, is it not, Miss Brollikins?

OXFORD YOUTH Yah! Now you have something silly to talk about, youre happy But I know what would make you sit up and do something

SIR ARTHUR Indeed? Thats interesting May I ask what?

OXFORD YOUTH Break your bloody windows

THE MAYOR Order! order!

ALOYSIA Come, Toffy! you promised not to use any of your West End language here You know we dont like it

SIR ARTHUR Thats right, Miss Brollikins snub him He is disgracing his class As a humble representative of that class I apologize for him to the Isle of Cats I apologize for his dress, for his manners, for his language He must shock you every time he opens his mouth

BLEE We working folks know too much of bad language and bad manners to see any fun in them or think they can do any good.

THE MAYOR Thats right

ALOYSIA We are as tired of bad manners as Toffy is tired of good manners. We brought Toffy here, Sir Arthur, because we knew he'd speak to you as a dock laborer would speak to you if his good manners would let him. And he's right, you know. He's rude, but he's right.

OXFORD YOUTH Yours devotedly, Brolly. And what has his Right Honorable nibs to say to that?

SIR ARTHUR [*concentrating himself on his adversary in the House of Commons manner*] I will tell the noble lord what I have to say. He may marshal his friends the unemployed and break every window in the West End, beginning with every pane of glass in this house. What will he gain by it? Next day a score or so of his followers will be in prison with their heads broken. A few ignorant and cowardly people who have still any money to spare will send it to the funds for the relief of distress, imagining that they are ransoming their riches. You, ladies and gentlemen, will have to put your hands in your pockets to support the wives and children of the men in prison, and to pay cheap lawyers to put up perfectly useless defences for them in the police courts. And then, I suppose, the noble lord will boast that he has made me do something at last. What can I do? Do you suppose that I care less about the sufferings of the poor than you? Do you suppose I would not revive trade and put an end to it all tomorrow if I could? But I am like yourself. I am in the grip of economic forces that are beyond human control. What mortal men could do this Government has done. We have saved the people from starvation by stretching unemployment benefit to the utmost limit of our national resources. We—

OXFORD YOUTH You have cut it down to fifteen bob a week and shoved every man you could off it with your beastly means test.

SIR ARTHUR [*fiercely*] What do you propose? Will you take my place and put the dole up to five pounds a week without any means test?

THE MAYOR Order! order! Why are we here? We are here because we are all sick of arguing and talking, and we want something doing. And here we are arguing and talking just as if it was an all night sitting of the Borough Council about an item of three-and-six for refreshments. If you, Sir Arthur, tell us that you can't find work for our people we

are only wasting your time and our own, sitting here.

He rises. The rest, except Hipney, follow his example. Sir Arthur is only too glad to rise too.

SIR ARTHUR. At least I hope I have convinced you about the windows, Mr Mayor.

THE MAYOR We needed no convincing. More crockery than windows will have to be broken if you gentlemen can do nothing to get us out of our present mess. But some people will say that a few thousands more to the relief funds is better than nothing. And some of the unemployed are glaziers.

SIR ARTHUR Let us close our little talk on a more hopeful note. I assure you it has been intensely interesting to me; and I may tell you that signs of a revival of trade are not wholly wanting. Some of the best informed city authorities are of opinion that this year will see the end of the crisis. Some of them even hold that trade is already reviving. By the last returns the export of Spanish onions has again reached the 1913 level.

OXFORD YOUTH. Holy Jerusalem! Spanish onions! Come on, Brolly [*He goes out*].

THE MAYOR We've got nothing out of this. We don't run to Spanish in the Isle. [*Resignedly*] Good morning [*He goes out*].

SIR ARTHUR [*winningly*] And do you, Miss Brolhkins, feel that you have got nothing?

ALOYSIA I feel what they feel. And I don't believe you feel anything at all [*She goes out, followed by Blee*].

BLEE [*turning at the door*] The Mayor's wrong. We've got something all right.

SIR ARTHUR [*brightening*] Indeed? What is it?

BLEE [*with intense contempt*] Your measure. [*He goes out*].

The Prime Minister, nettled by this gibe, resumes his seat angrily and pushes the bluebook out of his way. Then he notices that old Hipney has not budged from his seat at the secretary's bureau.

SIR ARTHUR. The deputation has withdrawn, Mr Hipney.

HIPNEY [*rising and coming to a chair at Sir Arthur's elbow, in which he makes himself comfortable with a disarmingly pleasant air of beginning the business instead of ending it*] Yes: now we can talk a bit. I been at this game now for fifty years.

SIR ARTHUR [*interested in spite of himself*] What game? Deputations?

HIPNEY Unemployed deputations This is my twelfth

SIR ARTHUR As many as that! But these crises dont come oftener than every ten years, do they?

HIPNEY. Not what you would call a crisis, perhaps But unemployment is chronic

SIR ARTHUR It always blows over, doesnt it? Trade revives

HIPNEY It used to We was the workshop of the world then But you gentlemen went out of the workshop business to make a war And while that was going on our customers had to find out how to make things for themselves Now we shall have to be their customers when weve any money to buy with

SIR ARTHUR No doubt that has occurred to some extent, but there is still an immense fringe of the human race growing up to a sense of the necessity for British goods

HIPNEY All goods is alike to that lot provided theyre the cheapest They tell me the Italians are tapping their volcanoes for cheap power We dont seem able to tap nothing The east is chock full of volcanoes they think no more of an earthquake there than you would of a deputation A Chinese coolie can live on a penny a day What can we do against labor at a penny a day and power for next to nothing out of the burning bowels of the earth?

SIR ARTHUR Too true, Mr Hipney Our workers must make sacrifices

HIPNEY They will if you drive em to it, Srarthur But it's you theyll sacrifice

SIR ARTHUR Oh come, Mr Hipney! you are a man of sense and experience What good would it do them to sacrifice me?

HIPNEY Not a bit in the world, sir But that wont stop them Look at yourself Look at your conferences! Look at your debates! They dont do no good But you keep on holding them It's a sort of satisfaction to you when you feel helpless Well, sir, if you come to helplessness there isnt on God's earth a creature more helpless than what our factories and machines have made of an English working man when nobody will give him a job and pay him to do it And when he gets it what does he understand of it? Just nothing Where did the material that he does his little bit of a job on come from? He dont know What will happen to it when it goes out of the factory after he and his like have all done their little bits of jobs on it? He dont

know Where could he buy it if it stopped coming to him? He dont know Where could he sell it if it was left on his hands? He dont know He dont know nothing of the business that his life depends on Turn a cat loose and itll feed itself Turn an English working man loose and he'll starve You have to buy him off with a scrap of dole to prevent his saying "Well, if I'm to die I may as well have the satisfaction of seeing you die first"

SIR ARTHUR But—I really must press the point—what good will that do him?

HIPNEY What good does backing horses do him? What good does drinking do him? What good does going to political meetings do him? What good does going to church do him? Not a scrap But he keeps on doing them all the same

SIR ARTHUR But surely you recognize, Mr Hipney, that all this is thoroughly wrong—wrong in feeling—contrary to English instincts—out of character, if I may put it that way

HIPNEY Well, Srarthur, whatever's wrong you and your like have taken on yourselves the job of setting it right I havnt I'm only a poor man a nobody, as you might say

SIR ARTHUR I have not taken anything on myself, Mr Hipney I have chosen a parliamentary career, and found it, let me tell you, a very arduous and trying one I might almost say a heartbreaking one I have just had to promise my wife to see a doctor for brain fag But that does not mean that I have taken it on myself to bring about the millennium

HIPNEY [*soothingly*] Just so, Srarthur just so It tries you and worries you, and breaks your heart and does no good, but you keep on doing it Theyve often wanted me to go into Parliament And I could win the seat Put up old Hipney for the Isle of Cats and your best man wouldnt have a chance against him But not me I know too much It would be the end of me, as it's been the end of all the Labor men that have done it The Cabinet is full of Labor men that started as red-hot Socialists, and what change has it made except that theyre in and out at Bucknam Palace like peers of the realm?

SIR ARTHUR You ought to be in Parliament, Mr Hipney You have the making of a first-rate debater in you

HIPNEY Psha! An old street corner speaker like me can debate the heads off you parlia-

mentary gentlemen. You stick your thumbs in your waistcoat holes and wait half an hour between every sentence to think of what to say next; and you call that debating. If I did that in the Isle not a man would stop to listen to me. Mind you, I know you mean it as a compliment that I'd make a good parliamentary debater. I appreciate it. But people don't look to Parliament for talk nowadays: that game is up. Not like it was in old Gladstone's time, eh?

SIR ARTHUR. Parliament, Mr Hipney, is what the people of England have made it. For good or evil we have committed ourselves to democracy. I am here because the people have sent me here.

HIPNEY. Just so. That's all the use they could make of the vote when they got it. Their hopes was in you; and your hopes is in Spanish onions. What a world it is, aint it, Srarthur?

SIR ARTHUR. We must educate our voters, Mr Hipney. Education will teach them to understand.

HIPNEY. Don't deceive yourself, Srarthur. You can't teach people anything they don't want to know. Old Dr Marx—Karl Marx they call him now—my father knew him well—thought that when he'd explained the Capitalist System to the working classes of Europe they'd unite and overthrow it. Fifty years after he founded his Red International the working classes of Europe rose up and shot one another down and blew one another to bits, and turned millions and millions of their infant children out to starve in the snow or steal and beg in the sunshine, as if Dr Marx had never been born. And they'd do it again tomorrow if they was set on to do it. Why did you set them on? All they wanted was to be given their job, and fed and made comfortable according to their notion of comfort. If you'd done that for them you wouldn't be having all this trouble. But you weren't equal to it; and now the fat's in the fire.

SIR ARTHUR. But the Government is not responsible for that. The Government cannot compel traders to buy goods that they cannot sell. The Government cannot compel manufacturers to produce goods that the traders will not buy. Without demand there can be no supply.

HIPNEY. There's a powerful demand just now, if demand is what you are looking for.

SIR ARTHUR. Can you point out exactly where, Mr Hipney?

HIPNEY. In our children's bellies, Srarthur. And in our own.

SIR ARTHUR. That is not an effective demand, Mr Hipney. I wish I had time to explain to you the inexorable laws of political economy. I—

HIPNEY [*interrupting him confidentially*]. No use, Srarthur. That game is up. That stuff you learnt at college, that gave you such confidence in yourself, won't go down with my lot.

SIR ARTHUR [*smiling*]. What is the use of saying that economic science and natural laws won't go down, Mr Hipney? You might as well say that the cold of winter won't go down.

HIPNEY. You see, you haven't read Karl Marx, have you?

SIR ARTHUR. Mr Hipney, when the Astronomer Royal tells me that it is twelve o'clock by Greenwich time I do not ask him whether he has read the nonsense of the latest flat earth man. I have something better to do with my time than to read the ravings of a half-educated German Communist. I am sorry you have wasted your own time reading such stuff.

HIPNEY. Merely read Marx! Bless you, Srarthur, I am like you. I talk about the old doctor without ever having read a word of him. But I know what that man did for them as did read him.

SIR ARTHUR. Turned their heads, eh?

HIPNEY. Just that, Srarthur. Turned their heads. Turned them right round the other way to yours. I don't know whether what Marx said was right or wrong, because I don't know what he said. But I know that he puts into every man and woman that does read him a conceit that they know all about political economy and can look down on the stuff you were taught at college as ignorant old-fashioned trash. Look at that girl Aloysia Brolhkins! Her father was a basket maker in Spitalfields. She's full of Marx. And as to examinations and scholarships and certificates and gold medals and the like, she's won enough of them to last your whole family for two generations. She can win them in her sleep. Look at Blee! His father was a cooper. But he managed to go through Ruskin College. You start him paying out Marx, and proving by the materialist theory of history

that Capitalism is bound to develop into Communism, and that whoever doesnt know it is an ignorant nobody or a half-educated college fool, and youll realize that your college conceit is up against a Marxist conceit that beats anything you ever felt for cocksureness and despising the people that havnt got it Look across Europe if you dont believe me It was that conceit, sir, that nerved them Russians to go through with their Communism in 1917

SIR ARTHUR I must read Marx, Mr Hipney I knew I had to deal with a sentimental revolt against unemployment I had no idea that it had academic pretensions

HIPNEY Lord bless you, Srarthur, the Labor movement is rotten with book learning, and your people dont seem ever to read anything When did an undersecretary ever sit up half the night after a hard day's work to read Karl Marx or anyone else? No fear Your hearts are not in your education, but our young people lift themselves out of the gutter with it. Thats how you can shoot and you can ride and you can play golf, and some of you can talk the hind leg off a donkey, but when it comes to book learning Aloysia and Blee can wipe the floor with you.

SIR ARTHUR I find it hard to believe that the Mayor ever burnt the midnight oil reading Marx

HIPNEY No more he didnt But he has to pretend to, same as your people have to pretend to understand the gold standard.

SIR ARTHUR [*laughing frankly*] You have us there, Mr Hipney I can make neither head nor tail of it, and I dont pretend to

HIPNEY Did you know the Mayor well, Srarthur? You called him your old friend Tom

SIR ARTHUR He took the chair for me once at an election meeting He has an artificial tooth that looks as if it were made of zinc I remembered him by that. [*Genuinely—rising*] What humbugs we Prime Ministers have to be, Mr Hipney! You know dont you? [*He offers his hand to signify that the conversation is over*]

MR HIPNEY [*rising and taking it rather pityingly*] Bless your innocence, Srarthur, you dont know what humbug is yet Wait til youre a Labor leader [*He winks at his host and makes for the door*]

SIR ARTHUR. Ha ha! Ha ha ha! Goodbye, Mr Hipney goodbye. Very good of you to

have given me so much of your time

HIPNEY Youre welcome to it, Srarthur Goodbye [*He goes out*]

Sir Arthur presses a button to summon Hilda Then he looks at his watch, and whistles, startled to find how late it is Hilda comes in quickly through the masked door

SIR ARTHUR. Do you know how late it is? To work! Work! work! work! Come along

HILDA I am afraid you cant do any work before you start for the Church House lunch The whole morning is gone with those people from the Isle of Cats

SIR ARTHUR But I have mountains of work to get through With one thing and another I havnt been able to do a thing for the last three weeks, and it accumulates and accumulates It will crush me if I dont clear it off before it becomes impossible

HILDA But I keep telling you, Sir Arthur, that if you will talk to everybody for half an hour instead of letting me get rid of them for you in two minutes, what can you expect? You say you havnt attended to anything for three weeks, but really you havnt attended to anything since the session began I hate to say anything, but really, when those Isle of Cats people took themselves off your hands almost providentially, to let that ridiculous old man talk to you for an hour—! [*She sits down angrily*]

SIR ARTHUR Nonsense! he didnt stay two minutes, and I got a lot out of him What about the letters this morning?

HILDA I have dealt with them you neednt bother There are two or three important ones that you ought to answer I have put them aside for you when you have time

Flavia and David dash into the room through the masked door even more excited and obstreperous than before, Flavia to her father's right, David to his left

FLAVIA Papa weve been to a meeting of the unemployed with Aloysia and Toffy

DAVID Such a lark!

FLAVIA We saw a police charge David was arrested

SIR ARTHUR Do you mean to say that you went with those people who were here?

FLAVIA Yes theyve come back to lunch with us

SIR ARTHUR To lunch!!!

DAVID Yes I say Aloysia's a marvellous girl

SIR ARTHUR [*determinedly*] I dont mind the

girl, but if that young whelp is coming to lunch here he must and shall change his clothes.

DAVID He's gone home to change and shave. he's dotty on Flavia

SIR ARTHUR Why am I afflicted with such children? Tell me at once what you have been doing What happened?

DAVID. The police brought the Chancellor of the Exchequer to make a speech to the unemployed to quiet them The first thing we heard him say was "Gentlemen. be patient I promise you you will soon see the one thing that can revive our industries and save our beloved country a rise in prices." The mob just gave one howl and went for him Then the police drew their batons and charged.

FLAVIA Davy couldnt stand the way the people were knocked about He screamed to them to stand The inspector collared him

SIR ARTHUR. Of course he did Quite right Such folly! [*To David*] How do you come to be here if you were arrested? Who bailed you?

DAVID. I asked the inspector who in hell he thought he was talking to Then Flavia cut in and told him who we were and that old Basham was like a father to us. All he said was "You go home, sir; and take your sister with you This is no place for you " So as I was rather in a funk by that time we collected Aloysia and Toffy and bunked for home.

SIR ARTHUR I have a great mind to have that inspector severely reprimanded for letting you go Three months would have done you a lot of good Go back to the drawing room, both of you, and entertain your new friends You know you are not allowed to come in here when I am at work. Be off with you [*He goes back to his seat*]

FLAVIA Well, what are we to do? Mamma sends us in on purpose to interrupt you when she thinks you have done enough

DAVID She says it's all we're good for

SIR ARTHUR A Prime Minister should have no children Will you get out, both of you; or must I ring for Burton to throw you out?

FLAVIA Mamma says you are to lunch, Hilda She wants another woman to make up the party.

HILDA Oh dear! [*rising*] You must excuse me, Sir Arthur I must telephone to put off some people who were coming to lunch with

me at The Apple Cart And I must change my frock

FLAVIA [*squabbling*] You neednt dress up for Brollikins, need you?

DAVID You let Aloysia alone You dont want Hilda to dress up for Barking, I suppose

SIR ARTHUR [*out of patience*] Get out Do you hear? Get out, the lot of you.

HILDA. Do come, Miss Chavender. Your father is very busy

SIR ARTHUR [*furiously*] Get OUT.

They retreat precipitately through the masked door Sir Arthur, left alone, rests his wearied head on the table between his arms

SIR ARTHUR At last, a moment's peace.

The word rouses the orator in him He raises his head and repeats it interrogatively, then tries its effect sweetly and solemnly again and again

SIR ARTHUR. Peace? . . . Peace Peace. Peace Peace. Peace. [*Now perfectly in tune*] "Yes, your Grace, my lords and gentlemen, my clerical friends We need peace We English are still what we were when time-honored Lancaster described us as 'This happy breed of men' We are above all a domestic nation On occasion we can be as terrible in war as we have always been wise and moderate in counsel But here, in this Church House, under the banner of the Prince of Peace, we know that the heart of England is the English home. Not the battlefield but the fireside—yes, your Grace, yes, my lords and gentlemen, yes, my clerical friends, the fire—"

He starts violently as his eye, sweeping round the imaginary assembly, lights on a woman in grey robes contemplating him gravely and pityingly She has stolen in noiselessly through the masked door.

SIR ARTHUR Ffffff!!! Who is that? Who are you? Oh, I beg your pardon You gave me such a—Whew!! [*He sinks back into his chair*] I didnt know there was anyone in the room

The lady neither moves nor speaks She looks at him with deepening pity He looks at her, still badly scared He rubs his eyes, shakes himself, looks again

SIR ARTHUR. Excuse me, but are you real?

THE LADY Yes

SIR ARTHUR. I wish you'd do something real Wont you sit down?

THE LADY Thank you. [*She sits down, very uncannily as it seems to him, in Basham's chair*].

SIR ARTHUR Will you be so good as to introduce yourself? Who are you?

THE LADY A messenger

SIR ARTHUR Please do not be enigmatic My nerves are all in rags I did not see you come in You appeared there suddenly looking like a messenger of death And now you tell me you are a messenger

THE LADY Yes a messenger of death

SIR ARTHUR I thought so [*With sudden mis-giving*] You mean my death, I hope Not my wife nor any of the children?

THE LADY [*smiling kindly*] No Your death

SIR ARTHUR [*relieved*] Well, thats all right.

THE LADY You are going to die

SIR ARTHUR So are we all The only question is, how soon?

THE LADY Too soon You are half dead already You have been dying a long time

SIR ARTHUR Well, I knew I was overworking burning the candle at both ends killing myself It doesnt matter I have made my will Everything is provided for my wife will be comfortably off, and the children will have as much as is good for them.

THE LADY You are resigned?

SIR ARTHUR No, but I cannot help myself

THE LADY Perhaps I can help you. I am not only a messenger I am a healer

SIR ARTHUR A what?

THE LADY A healer One who heals the sick. One who holds off death until he is welcome in his proper time

SIR ARTHUR You cannot help me I am caught in the wheels of a merciless political machine The political machine will not stop for you It has ground many men to pieces before their time, and it will grind me

THE LADY My business is with life and death, not with political machinery

SIR ARTHUR. In that case I am afraid you can be of no use to me, so will you think it very uncivil of me if I go on with my work?

THE LADY Shall I vanish?

SIR ARTHUR Not unless you have something else to do As you are a ghost, and therefore not in time but in eternity, another ten minutes or so wont cost you anything Somehow, your presence is helping me A presence is a wonderful thing Would you mind sitting there and reading The Times while I work?

THE LADY I never read the newspapers I read men and women I will sit here and read you Or will that make you self-conscious?

SIR ARTHUR My dear ghost, a public man

is so accustomed to people staring at him that he very soon has no self to be conscious of You wont upset me in the least You may even throw in a round of applause occasionally, so that I may find out the effective bits to work up

THE LADY Go on I will wait as long as you like

SIR ARTHUR. Thank you. Now let me see where I was when you appeared [*He takes up a scrap of paper on which he has made a memorandum*] Ah yes Ive got it Peace Yes peace [*Trying to make out a word*] Ence—ence—what? Oh, ensue! Of course a good word. "My friends, lay and clerical, we must ensue peace Yes, ensue peace Peace Disarmament" A burst of Pacifist applause there, perhaps "Who says that we need a hundred battleships, gentlemen? Christian brotherhood is a safer defence than a thousand battleships You have my pledge that the Government will be quite content with —with—" oh, well, my secretary will fill that in with whatever number of ships the Japanese are standing out for By the way, do you think battleships are any real use now? Kenworthy says theyre not and he was in the navy It would be such a tremendous score for us at Geneva if we offered to scrap all our battleships We could make up for them in aeroplanes and submarines I should like to have the opinion of an impartial and disinterested ghost

THE LADY As I listen to you I seem to hear a ghost preparing a speech for his fellow ghosts, ghosts from a long dead past To me it means nothing, because I am a ghost from the future

SIR ARTHUR Thats a curious idea Of course if there are ghosts from the past there must be ghosts from the future

THE LADY Yes women and men who are ahead of their time They alone can lead the present into the future They are ghosts from the future The ghosts from the past are those who are behind the times, and can only drag the present back

SIR ARTHUR What an excellent definition of a Conservative! Thank Heaven I am a Liberal!

THE LADY You mean that you make speeches about Progress and Liberty instead of about King and Country

SIR ARTHUR. Of course I make speeches that is the business of a politician Dont you

like speeches?

THE LADY On the Great Day of Judgment the speechmakers will stand with the seducers and the ravishers, with the traffickers in maddening drugs, with those who make men drunk and rob them, who entice children and violate them

SIR ARTHUR. What nonsense! Our sermons and speeches are the glories of our literature, and the inspired voices of our religion, our patriotism, and—of course—our politics

THE LADY Sermons and speeches are not religion, not patriotism, not politics. they are only the gibbering of ghosts from the past You are a ghost from a very dead past Why do you not die your bodily death? Is it fair for a ghost to go about with a live body?

SIR ARTHUR This is too personal I am afraid I cannot get on with my speech while you are there ordering my funeral Oblige me by vanishing Go Disappear. Shoo!

THE LADY I cannot vanish [*Merrily changing her attitude*] Shall we stop playing at ghosts, and accept one another for convenience sake as real people?

SIR ARTHUR [*shaking off his dreaminess*] Yes, lets [*He rises and comes to her*]. We have been talking nonsense [*He pulls out a chair They sit close together*] You had me half hypnotized But first, shake hands. I want to feel that you are real.

He offers his right hand She seizes both his hands and holds them vigorously, looking straight into his eyes

SIR ARTHUR [*brightening*] Well, I dont know whether this is real or not, but it's electric, and very soothing and jolly. Ah-a-a-ah! [*a deep sighing breath*] And now, my dear lady, will you be good enough to tell me who the devil you are?

THE LADY [*releasing him*] Only your wife's lady doctor. Did she not tell you to expect me?

SIR ARTHUR Of course, of course How stupid of me! Yes, yes, yes, yes, to be sure And now I am going to be frank with you I dont believe in doctors Neither does my wife; but her faith in quacks is unlimited. And as I am on the verge of a nervous breakdown, she is planting every possible variety of quack on me—you will excuse the expression?—

THE LADY I excuse everything from my patients Go on.

SIR ARTHUR Well, I receive them all as I

am receiving you, just to gratify her, or rather to prevent her from making my life miserable They all say the same obvious thing and they are none of them of the slightest use You are going to say it all over again Can you forgive me for saying flatly that I will not pay you twenty guineas for saying it not if you said it twenty times over?

THE LADY. Not even if I shew you how to cure yourself? The twenty guineas is an important part of the cure It will make you take it seriously

SIR ARTHUR I know perfectly well how to cure myself The cure is as simple as a b c. I am Prime Minister of Great Britain That is, I am an overworked, overworried, overstrained, overburdened, overdriven man, suffering from late hours, irregular snatched meals, no time for digestion nor for enough sleep, and having to keep my mind at full stretch all the time struggling with problems that are no longer national problems but world problems In short, I am suffering acutely from brain fag

THE LADY And the cure?

SIR ARTHUR. A fortnight's golf that's the cure I know it all by heart So suppose we drop it, and part friends You see, I am really frightfully busy

THE LADY That is not my diagnosis [*She rises*]. Goodbye

SIR ARTHUR [*alarmed*] Diagnosis! Have you been diagnosing me? Do you mean that there is something else the matter with me?

THE LADY. Not something else Something different.

SIR ARTHUR Sit down, pray I can spare another two minutes Whats wrong?

THE LADY [*resuming her seat*] You are dying of an acute want of mental exercise

SIR ARTHUR [*unable to believe his ears*] Of—of—of WHAT, did you say?

THE LADY. You are suffering from that very common English complaint, an underworked brain To put it in one word, a bad case of frivolity, possibly incurable.

SIR ARTHUR Frivolity! Did I understand you to say that frivolity is a common English failing?

THE LADY. Yes Terribly common Almost a national characteristic

SIR ARTHUR Do you realize that you are utterly mad?

THE LADY. Is it you or I who have piloted

England on to the rocks?

SIR ARTHUR Come come! No politics What do you prescribe for me?

THE LADY I take my patients into my retreat in the Welsh mountains, formerly a monastery, now much stricter and perfectly sanitary No newspapers, no letters, no idle ladies No books except in the afternoon as a rest from thinking

SIR ARTHUR How can you think without books?

THE LADY How can you have thoughts of your own when you are reading other people's thoughts?

SIR ARTHUR [*groaning*] Oh, do talk sense What about golf?

THE LADY Games are for people who can neither read nor think Men trifle with their business and their politics, but they never trifle with their games Golf gives them at least a week-end of earnest concentration It brings truth home to them. They cannot pretend that they have won when they have lost, nor that they made a magnificent drive when they fozzled it The Englishman is at his best on the links, and at his worst in the Cabinet But what your country needs is not your body but your mind. And I solemnly warn you that unless you exercise your mind you will lose it A brain underexercised is far more injurious to health than an underexercised body You know how men become bone lazy for want of bodily exercise Well, they become brain lazy for want of mental exercise, and if nature meant them to be thinkers the results are disastrous All sorts of bodily diseases are produced by half used minds, for it is the mind that makes the body that is my secret, and the secret of all the true healers I am sorry you will not allow me to take you a little on the way back to health with me Good morning [*She rises*]

SIR ARTHUR Must you go?

THE LADY Well, you are so busy—

SIR ARTHUR [*rising*] Ah yes I forgot I am frightfully busy Still, if you could spare another minute—

THE LADY If you wish [*She sits down*]

SIR ARTHUR [*sitting down*] You see, what makes your diagnosis so pricelessly funny to me is that as a matter of fact my life has been a completely intellectual life, and my training the finest intellectual training in the world. First rate preparatory school Harrow Oxford Parliament An Undersecretaryship

The Cabinet Finally the Leadership of the House as Prime Minister Intellect, intellect, all the time

THE LADY At Harrow you wrote Latin verses, did you not?

SIR ARTHUR Yes, of course

THE LADY Do you write any now?

SIR ARTHUR No, of course not You dont understand We learnt to write Latin verses not because the verses are any good—after all, it's only a trick of stringing old tags together—but because it's such a splendid training for the mind

THE LADY Have all the boys who made Latin verses at Harrow splendidly trained minds?

SIR ARTHUR Yes I unhesitatingly say yes I dont mean, of course, that they are all geniuses, but if you go into the best society you will see that their minds are far superior to those of persons who have had no classical training

THE LADY You mean that they can all be trusted to say the same thing in the same way when they discuss public affairs

SIR ARTHUR Precisely They are an educated class, you see

THE LADY [*coldly, rising*] Yes I see I have really nothing more to say, Sir Arthur [*She takes a card from her bag and puts it on the table*] That is the address of my retreat in Wales

SIR ARTHUR [*rising, rather disappointed at having produced no effect*] But surely you cannot deny that a man is the better for having been put through the mill of our great educational system.

THE LADY If a man is born with a hopelessly bad set of teeth I think it is better for him, and kinder to him, to pull them all out and replace them with a good set of artificial teeth If some of your political colleagues had not been provided with artificial political minds in the manner you describe they would have been left without any political minds at all But in that case they would not have meddled in politics, and that, I think, would have been a public advantage May I reserve a bedroom and a private study for you?

SIR ARTHUR Pooh! I am not going to your retreat

THE LADY [*steadfastly*] I think you are

SIR ARTHUR I give you up You are fact-proof I am lazy, I am idle, and I am breaking

down from overwork How logical!

THE LADY All the idlest and laziest of my patients slave from morning to midnight trifling and tittle-tattling about great things. To a retreat, Sir Arthur, get thee to a retreat. I am never mistaken in my diagnosis. I shall telephone to ask whether my number one suite, with private bath and meditation parlor, is vacant

SIR ARTHUR No: I wont be rushed Do you hear? I wont be rushed [*She is quite unshaken, and he proceeds, much less resolutely*] Of course I shall have to go somewhere for a rest, and if you could really recommend it as a bracing place—

THE LADY. Bracing? What for?

SIR ARTHUR Well, bracing, you know. Bracing

THE LADY Curious, how idle people are always clamoring to be braced! Like trousers.

SIR ARTHUR Idle people! How you stick to your point! And what a humbug you are! Dont think you can impose on me with your meditation parlor and your dignified airs. I do that sort of thing myself occasionally, and you know it's no use giving tracts to a missionary But I feel somehow that you are good for me You are a dear delightful big-hearted wrongheaded half-educated crazy-boots, but a woman may be all that and yet have the right instinct as to how to flirt intellectually with a tired thinker. Will you promise to talk to me if I come?

THE LADY I will even let you talk to me I guarantee that in a fortnight you will begin to think before you talk Your dead mind will come to life I shall make a man of you Goodbye [*She goes out quickly through the main door*]

SIR ARTHUR [*calling after her gaily*] Ha ha! Incorrigible, incorrigible [*He takes her card from the table, and contemplates it*] Oh! I forgot to ask her how much a week she wants for that meditation parlor [*He looks tragic*]

HILDA [*emerging from her office*] Anything the matter, Sir Arthur?

SIR ARTHUR I am going into a retreat. Because my brain is underworked Do you grasp that idea? Have you ever heard of a retreat for the mentally underworked?

HILDA There is a very nice one at Seven-oaks that my aunt was sent to. But that is for inebriates.

SIR ARTHUR The one I'm going to is for the mentally underworked, the thoughtless and

brainless, the inveterately lazy and frivolous. Yes. the frivolous your ears do not deceive you.

HILDA [*going to her desk*] Oh, well, they'll amuse you you always get on well with people of that sort Shall I pack your usual holiday books? some detective stories and Wordsworth?

SIR ARTHUR No You will procure all the books you can find by a revolutionary German Jew named Harry Marks—

HILDA. Dont you mean Karl Marx?

SIR ARTHUR Thats the man Karl Marx. Get me every blessed book by Karl Marx that you can find translated into English, and have them packed for the retreat.

HILDA There are much newer books by Marxists Lenin and Trotsky and Stahn and people like that

SIR ARTHUR Get them all Pack the lot By George, I'll teach Alderwoman Aloysia Brothkins to give herself airs I'll teach her and her rabble of half-baked half-educated intellectual beggars-on-horseback that any Oxford man can beat them at their own silly game I'll just turn Karl Marx inside-out for them [*The household gong sounds*] Lunch! Come on that woman's given me an appetite [*He goes out impetuously through the masked door*]

HILDA [*rushing after him*] No, no, Sir Arthur the Church House! the Church House! youve forgotten that you have to lunch at [*her voice is lost in the distance*]

ACT II

The same scene on the 10th November at 9 30 in the morning There is a generous fire in the grate, and the visitors wear winter clothes. Basham is on the hearthrug, warming his back and reading The Daily Herald.

BASHAM [*amazed by what he reads*] Gosh! [*He reads further*] Wh-e-e-ew!! [*He reads still further*] Well I'll be dashed!!!

Hilda enters through the main door, and announces an explosive elderly gentleman, evidently a person of consequence, who follows her

HILDA Sir Dexter Rightside

SIR DEXTER [*joining Basham on the hearth*] Ah! That you, Basham? Have you come to arrest him?

BASHAM You may well ask He isnt up yet. Miss Hanways is there any sign of his getting a move on?

HILDA [*much worried*] Lady Chavender wont allow him to be disturbed. She says his speech last night at the Guildhall banquet quite tired him out. People have been ringing up and calling all the morning, but she just puts her back to his door and says that anyone who makes noise enough to waken him leaves her service that minute

SIR DEXTER Nonsense! He must see me Does Lady Chavender suppose that a Prime Minister can stand the country on its head without a word of warning to his colleagues and then go to bed as if he was tired out by a day's fishing?

HILDA [*desperate*] Well, what can I do, Sir Dexter? [*She goes to her bureau*]

SIR DEXTER Basham go and break open his bedroom door

BASHAM I cant I'm a policeman I mustnt do it without a warrant Go and do it yourself

SIR DEXTER I have a devilish good mind to Can you conceive anything more monstrous, Basham? [*He sits down in the chair next the end chair*] But I said that this would happen I said so When we made this damned coalition that they call a National Government I was entitled to the Prime Ministership I was the Leader of the Conservative Party I had an enormous majority in the country the election proved that we could have done quite well without Chavender But I had to give way He humbugged us He pretended that without his old guard of Liberals and his rag-tag and bobtail of Labor men and Socialists and lawyers and journalists-on-the-make and used-up trade union secretaries, and all the rest of the democratic dregs of human society, we couldnt be sure of a majority His golden voice was to do the trick. He was the popular man, the safe man I was the unpopular Die Hard who couldnt be trusted to keep my temper So I stood down I sacrificed myself I took the Foreign Secretaryship Well, what price your safe man now? How do you like your Bolshy Premier? Who was right? the funkers and compromisers or the old Die Hard?

BASHAM It's amazing I could have sworn that if there was a safe man in England that could be trusted to talk and say nothing, to thump the table and do nothing, Arthur Chavender was that man Whats happened to him? What does it mean? Did he go mad at the sanatorium, do you think? Or was he

mad before that woman took him there?

SIR DEXTER Mad! Not a bit of it But you had better look up that woman's record there may be money from Moscow behind this

BASHAM Arthur take money! Thats going too far

SIR DEXTER The woman took the money It would be waste of money to bribe Chavender you could always trust him to say whatever he thought would please his audience without being paid for it damned mountebank.

BASHAM But he didnt try to please his audience at the Guildhall They wanted some of his best soothing syrup about law and order after the attack on the Lord Mayor's Show in the afternoon by the unemployed, but according to The Daily Herald here he gave them a dose of boiling Socialism instead

SIR DEXTER [*nervously*] By the way, Basham, I hope you have the unemployed well in hand today

BASHAM Quiet as lambs Theyre all reading the papers New editions every half-hour Like 1914 over again.

Sir Arthur's voice is heard, singing scales Hilda looks in

HILDA I think I hear Sir Arthur singing He must have got up

SIR DEXTER Singing! Is this a moment for minstrelsy?

HILDA He always sings scales after his bath [*she vanishes*]

After a final burst of solfeggi the masked door is opened vigorously and Chavender enters beaming

SIR ARTHUR Ah, here you are, Dexy [*he proffers his hand*]

SIR DEXTER [*like a baited bull*] Dont attempt to shake hands with me Dont dare call me Dexy

SIR ARTHUR What on earth's the matter? Got out at the wrong side of the bed this morning, eh? Frightfully sorry to have kept you waiting, Basham Whats wrong with the Foreign Secretary this time?

SIR DEXTER This time! What do you mean by this time?

SIR ARTHUR Well theres nothing very novel about your turning up before breakfast in a blazing rage, is there? What is it, Basham?

BASHAM Oh come, P M' If you were too drunk last night at the Guildhall to know what you were saying, youd better read the

papers [*he offers his paper*]

SIR ARTHUR [*keeping his hands behind his back to warm them*] I remember perfectly well what I said last night. And I drank nothing but barley water

BASHAM [*insisting*] But look at it, man [*Quoting the headlines*] New program for winter session Nationalization of ground rents Nationalization of banks. Nationalization of collieries Nationalization of transport.

SIR DEXTER [*moaning*] Nationalization of women. Why omit it? Why omit it?

BASHAM No nothing about women. Municipalization of urban land and the building trade, and consequent extinction of rates

SIR DEXTER Apostate!

BASHAM No. nothing about the Church Abolition of tariffs and substitution of total prohibition of private foreign trade in protected industries. State imports only, to be sold at State regulated prices

SIR DEXTER. Rot! Incomprehensible and unheard-of rot

BASHAM Compulsory public service for all, irrespective of income, as in war time

SIR DEXTER Slavery. Call it by its proper name Slavery

BASHAM. Restoration of agriculture Collective farming. Nationalization of fertilizer industries Nitrogen from the air Power from the tides Britain self-supporting and blockade proof.

SIR DEXTER. Madness Ruin to our foreign trade

BASHAM Ruthless extinction of parasitism

SIR DEXTER You dont even know the present law You have the Verminous Persons Act. What more do you want?

BASHAM Doubling of the surtax on unearned incomes.

SIR DEXTER Yes. take our last penny! And when the little that the present ruinous taxation has left us is gone; when we have closed our accounts with the last tradesman and turned the last servant into the streets, where are they to find employment? Who is to pay their wages? What is to become of religion when nobody can afford pewrents or a penny to put in the plate? Even sport will not be safe: our breed of horses will be doomed, our packs of hounds sold or slaughtered, and our masters of hounds will be caddies on motor bicycles That is to be England's future!

SIR ARTHUR But is that all the papers have

reported?

SIR DEXTER All!!!

BASHAM Oh come! All! Isnt that about enough?

SIR ARTHUR But have they said nothing about our promise to restore the cuts made in the pay of the army and navy and police?

SIR DEXTER Our promise! Whose promise?

BASHAM [*interested*] What was that you said? Are you going to put my men's wages up to the old figure?

SIR ARTHUR We shall give you another five thousand men, pay the old wages with a rise of ten per cent, and double your salary.

BASHAM Whew! That alters the case a bit

SIR DEXTER [*rising*] Basham: you are not going to allow yourself to be corrupted like this! Are you such a dupe as to imagine that free Englishmen will tolerate such a monstrous waste of public money?

BASHAM If I have another five thousand men and a rise on the old wages, I'll answer for the free Englishmen. If they dont like it they can lump it

SIR DEXTER You really believe he can keep all the monstrous promises he has made?

BASHAM No of course he cant But he can keep this one He can raise the pay of the ranks and double my salary, and that is all that concerns me. I'm a policeman, not a politician

SIR DEXTER. Youre a mercenary gangster and a damned fool thats what you are [*He flings himself into the end chair*]

BASHAM [*calmly*] You seem ruffled, Sir Dexter

Before Sir Dexter can reply, Hilda returns and announces a new visitor

HILDA Admiral Sir Bemrose Hotspot [*She goes out*]

Sir Bemrose is a halfwitted admiral, but the half that has not been sacrificed to his profession is sound and vigorous.

SIR BEMROSE [*in the breeziest spirits*] Morning, Dey Morning, Basham [*Slapping Sir Arthur on the back*] Splendid, Arthur! Never heard you in better form Thats the stuff to give em [*They shake hands cordially*]

SIR DEXTER [*sobered by his astonishment*] Rosy have you gone mad too? Have you forgotten that you are a Conservative, and that it was as a Conservative that you were made First Lord of the Admiralty, at my personal suggestion and insistence, in this so-called National Government, which now, thank

Heaven, wont last one day after the next meeting of Parliament?

SIR BENROSE Wont it, by Jove! It's safe for the next five years What the country wants is straight orders, discipline, character, pluck, a big navy, justice for the British sailor, no sham disarmaments, and absolute command of the sea If that isnt Conservatism what is Conservatism? But mind, Arthur, I must have twelve new aeroplane-carrying battleships I have my eye on Japan And theres America And, of course, Russia

SIR ARTHUR You shall have them, Rosy Twentyfour if you say the word

SIR BENROSE Good! Then I'll answer for the House of Commons

SIR DEXTER Dont be silly What can you do with the House of Commons, except empty it whenever you get up to speak?

SIR BENROSE I leave the speaking to Arthur it's his job, not mine But if there is any further attempt to starve the navy it can give you a little surprise at Westminster How will you feel when you see a submarine come to the surface off the terrace, and the commander sends in word that he gives you just five minutes before he torpedoes the whole damned Front Bench?

SIR DEXTER You are talking ridiculous nonsense Do you suppose for a moment that the navy would be allowed to interfere in politics?

SIR BENROSE Who's to stop it? Where would Lenin and Stalin and Trotsky and all that Bolshy lot have been without the Baltic fleet and the Kronstadt sailors? Do you suppose the British navy, with its discipline and its respectable Conservative commanders, couldnt do what these Communist scoundrels did?

SIR DEXTER How long would the British navy survive the abolition of property in this country? tell me that

SIR BENROSE Dont talk to the navy about property We dont live by property we live by service [*He takes the chair next to the presidential one, and pursues his personal grievance angrily*] You and your confounded property owners grudge us a clerk's salary for commanding a battleship, and then dock a quarter off it for income tax We cant set foot on shore without being rented and rated until we can hardly afford to educate our children Thanks to Arthur, you are pledged now to give us our pay honestly free of income tax and make these lazy idle lubbers

of landlords sweat for it I call that the essence of Conservatism Thats the way to dish these Labor chaps and Red flaggers and all the rest of the scum you have been pandering to ever since you gave them the vote Give them whats good for them, and put their ballot papers behind the fire. thats what this country needs

SIR ARTHUR You see, Dexy we have the navy and the police on our side

SIR DEXTER May I ask who are "we"?

SIR ARTHUR Why, the National Government, of course You and I, Dexy you and I

SIR DEXTER It makes me sick to hear you couple my name with yours It always did.

HILDA [*announcing*] The President of the Board of Trade Mr Glenmorison

Glenmorison is an easy mannered Scottish gentleman, distinctly the youngest of the party

SIR ARTHUR Hallo, Sandy Sit down. Lets all sit down and have it out

They settle themselves at the table with their backs to the fire, Sir Arthur in the middle, Glenmorison on his left, Sir Benrose on his right, and Sir Dexter and Basham right and left respectively

GLENMORISON Well, Sir Arthur, when you were letting yourself go so recklessly you might have said a word about Home Rule for Scotland We may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb

SIR DEXTER Wel! wel! wel! Who are we? If you mean the Cabinet, it is not responsible for the Prime Minister's frantic proceedings He acted without consulting us Do you suppose that if I had heard a word of this outburst of Bolshevism I should have consented to it?

SIR ARTHUR That was why I didnt consult you

SIR DEXTER Psha!

SIR ARTHUR The responsibility is mine and mine alone

SIR BENROSE Not at all I claim my share, Arthur You got the part about the navy from me

GLENMORISON Same here, Sir Dexter I claim at least two items

SIR DEXTER Much good may they do you Arthur's seat is safe anybody named Chavender can get in unopposed in his constituency because his cunning old father-in-law has every voter in the place bribed up to the neck But your majority at the last election

was seventeen there were three recounts. Your seat's gone, anyhow

GLENMORISON On the contrary, Sir Dexter, it's safe for the first time in the history of Scotland

SIR DEXTER Safe! How? You will get the boot as a crazy Bolshevik unless you come out with me and repudiate Chavender promptly and decisively

GLENMORISON Oh, I'm afraid I can't do that, Sir Dexter. You see, the balance is held in my constituency by the tradesmen and shopkeepers. Their great grievance is the heavy rates. And though they are all doing middling well they think they could do better if they could raise enough capital to extend their businesses a bit. But the financiers and promoters won't look at small businesses. They are thinking in millions while my people are thinking in thousands, and mostly in only four figures at that. It's easy enough to get a couple of hundred thousand pounds if you are willing to call it a quarter of a million and pay interest on that sum. But what good is that to a man in the High Street in my constituency who wants from five to twenty thousand to extend his little business?

SIR DEXTER Nonsense! The bank will give him an overdraft if his credit is good

GLENMORISON Yes; and call it in at the next slump and panic on the Stock Exchange. I can shew you half a dozen men who were forced into bankruptcy in the last panic, though they were as solvent as you or I. But Sir Arthur's proposal of panic-proof national and municipal banks, as ready and eager to find five thousand for the five thousand man as the financiers are to find a million on condition that enough of it sticks to their own fingers, is just the thing for my people. I daren't say a word against it. It's an inspiration as far as my constituents are concerned. They're a canny lot, my people. They'd vote for the devil if he'd promise to abolish the rates and open a municipal bank. My majority fell to seventeen last time because I went to them with empty hands and a bellyful of advice to economize and make sacrifices. This bank nationalization is good business for them. They'll just jump at it.

SIR DEXTER In short, you will make Utopian promises that you know very well will never be carried out.

GLENMORISON. You made a lot of Utopian promises, Sir Dexter, when you formed this

National Government. Instead of carrying them out you told the voters to tighten their belts and save the Bank of England. They tightened their belts, and now the Bank of England is paying twelve and sixpence in the pound. Still, I admit, you pulled down my Liberal majority over my Conservative opponent from four thousand to seventeen. I've got to pull that up again. I say nothing about the rest of the program; but I represent the small man, and on this bank business I am with Sir Arthur all the time.

HILDA [announcing] Sir Jafna Pandranath [She withdraws]

This announcement creates a marked sensation. All five gentlemen rise as if to receive a royal personage. Sir Jafna is an elderly Cingalese plutocrat, small and slender to the verge of emaciation, elegantly dressed, but otherwise evidently too much occupied and worried by making money to get any fun out of spending it. One guesses that he must make a great deal of it, for the reverence with which he is received by the five Britons, compared with their unceremonious handling of one another, is almost sycophantic.

SIR JAFNA Hallo! Am I breaking into a Cabinet meeting?

SIR ARTHUR No: not a bit. Only a few friendly callers. Pray sit down.

SIR DEXTER [offering the end chair to the visitor] You are welcome, Sir Jafna. Most welcome. You represent money, and money brings fools to their senses.

SIR JAFNA Money! Not at all. I am a poor man. I never know from one moment to another whether I am worth thirteen millions or only three. [He sits down. They all sit down].

SIR BEMROSE I happen to know, Sir Jafna, that your enterprises stand at twenty millions today at the very least.

GLENMORISON Fifty.

SIR JAFNA How do you know? How do you know? The way I am plundered at every turn! [To Sir Dexter] Your people take the shirt off my back.

SIR DEXTER My people! What on earth do you mean?

SIR JAFNA Your land monopolists. Your blackmailers. Your robber barons. Look at my Blayport Docks reconstruction scheme! Am I a public benefactor or am I not? Have I not enough to live on and die on without troubling myself about Blayport? Shall I be any the happier when it has ten square miles of docks instead of a tuppenny-hapenny fishing

harbor? What have I to gain except the satisfaction of seeing a big publicly useful thing well done, and the knowledge that without me it could not be done? Shall I not be half ruined if it fails?

SIR DEMROSE Well, whats wrong with it, old chap?

SIR JAFNA Rosy you make me puke. What is wrong with it is that the owners of all the miles of land that are indispensable to my scheme, and that without it would not be worth fifteen pounds an acre, are opening their mouths so wide that they will grab sixty per cent of the profit without lifting a finger except to pocket the wealth that I shall create I live, I work, I plan, I shatter my health and risk all I possess only to enrich these parasites, these vampires, these vermin in the commonwealth [*Shrieking*] Yes vermin! [*Subsiding*] You were quite right at the Guildhall last night, Arthur you must nationalize the land and put a stop to this shameless exploitation of the financiers and entrepreneurs by a useless, idle, and predatory landed class

SIR ARTHUR [*chuckling*] Magnificent! I have the support of the City

SIR JAFNA To the last vote, to the last penny These pirates think nothing of extorting a million an acre for land in the city A man cannot have an address in London for his letters until he has agreed to pay them from five hundred to a thousand a year He cant even die without paying them for a grave to lie in. Make them disgorge, Arthur Skin them alive Tax them twenty shillings in the pound Make them earn their own living, damn them [*He wipes his brow and adds, rather hysterically*] Excuse me, boys, but if you saw the Blayport estimates—I [*he can no more*]

SIR DEXTER May I ask you to address yourself to this question not as an emotional oriental [*Sir Jafna chokes convulsively*] but as a sane man of business If you destroy the incomes of our landed gentry where will you find the capital that exists solely through their prudent saving—their abstinence?

SIR JAFNA Bah pooh! Pooh bah! I will find it where they find it, in the product of the labor I employ At present I have to pay exorbitant and unnecessary wages Why? Because out of those wages the laborer has to pay half or quarter as rent to the landlord. The laborer is ignorant he thinks he is robbed

by the landlord, but the robbed victim is me —ME! Get rid of the landlord and I shall have all the capital he now steals In addition I shall have cheap labor That is not oriental emotion it is British commonsense I am with you, Arthur, to the last drop of my oriental blood Nationalized land compulsory labor abolition of rates strikes made criminal I heartily endorse them all in the name of Capital and private enterprise I say nothing about the rest of your program, Arthur, but on these points no true Liberal can question your magnificent statesmanship

SIR ARTHUR [*delighted*] You hear that, Dexy Put that in your pipe and smoke it

HILDA [*announcing*] His Grace the Duke of Domesday [*She goes out*]

An elderly delicately built aristocrat comes in Well preserved, but nearer 70 than 60

THE DUKE [*surprised to see so many people*] Do I intrude, Arthur? I thought you were disengaged

SIR ARTHUR Not at all Only a talk over last night Make yourself at home

SIR DEXTER You come in the nick of time Sir Jafna here has just been qualifying you as a bloodsucker, a pirate, a parasite, a robber baron and finally as vermin. Vermin! How do you like it?

THE DUKE [*calmly taking the end chair nearest the window, on Basham's left*] I wonder why the epithet robber is applied only to barons You never hear of robber dukes, yet my people have done plenty of robbery in their time [*With a sigh of regret*] Ah, thats all over now The robbers have become the robbed. I wish you would create some intermediate class of honest folk. I dislike your calling me vermin, Arthur

SIR ARTHUR I didnt It was Jafna

THE DUKE Ungrateful Jafna! He is buying up my Blayport estate for next to nothing

SIR JAFNA Next to nothing! Holy Brahmal

THE DUKE [*continuing*] He will make millions out of it. After paying off the mortgages I shall get three and a half per cent on what is left to me out of the beggarly price he offers, and on that three and a half I shall be income-taxed and surtaxed. Jafna's grandsons will go to Eton. Mine will go to a Polytechnic.

SIR DEMROSE Send them to Dartmouth, old chap Theres a career for them in the navy now that Arthur is at the helm

SIR DEXTER A lieutenant's pay and pension

for the future Duke of Domesday! Thats the proposition, is it?

THE DUKE. He will be lucky to have any pay at all. But I shall support you in any case, Arthur. You have at last publicly admitted that the death duties are unsound in principle, and promised to abolish them. That will save us from utter extinction in three generations; and the landed classes are with you to the last man for it. Accept the humble gratitude of a pauperized duke.

SIR DEXTER. And the rest of the program. Do you swallow that too?

THE DUKE. I doubt if the rest of the program will come off. Besides, I dont pretend to understand it. By the way, Sir Jafna, I wish you would take Domesday Towers off my hands for a while. I cant afford to live in it. I cant afford even to keep it dusted. You can have it for a hundred a year.

SIR JAFNA. Too far from town.

THE DUKE. Not by aeroplane. Do think it over.

Sir Jafna shrugs his shoulders and intimates that it is hopeless. The Duke resigns himself to the expected.

SIR ARTHUR. Dexty, you are in a minority of one. The landlords are on my side. The capitalists, big and little, are on my side. The fighting services are on my side. The police are on my side. If you leave us you go out into the wilderness alone. What have you to say?

SIR DEXTER. I have to say that you are a parcel of blind fools. You are trying to scuttle the ship on the chance of each of you grabbing a share of the insurance money. But the Country will deal with you. The Country does not want change. The Country never has wanted change. The Country never will want change. And because I will resist change while I have breath in my body I shall not be alone in England. You have all deserted me and betrayed your party; but I warn you that though I am utterly alone in this room.

HILDA [*reappearing*]. The deputation, Sir Arthur. Theyve come back. [*She vanishes*].

The deputation enters. Hipney is not with them. Barking, shaved, brilliantly dressed, and quite transfigured, is jubilant. Aloysia glows indignation. Blee and the Mayor, doggedly wearing their hats and overcoats, are gloomy, angry, and resolute. They group themselves just inside the door, glowering at the Prime Minister and his colleagues.

SIR ARTHUR [*beaming*]. Gentlemen, a Labor

deputation from the Isle of Cats. The one element that was lacking in our councils. You have heard the voice of the peerage, of the city, of the King's forces. You will now hear the voice of the proletariat. Sit down, ladies and gentlemen.

THE MAYOR [*rudely*]. Who are you calling the proletariat? Do you take us for Communists? [*He remains standing*].

ALOYSIA. What you are going to hear, Sir Arthur, is the voice of Labor. [*She remains standing*].

BLEE. The verdict of democracy. [*He remains standing*].

EARL OF BARKING. The bleating of a bloody lot of fools. I am with you, Chavender. [*He detaches himself from the group and flings himself into Hilda's chair with intense disgust*].

SIR ARTHUR [*surprised*]. Am I to understand that your colleagues are against me?

THE MAYOR. Of course we're against you. Do you expect me to go back to my people and tell them they should vote for compulsory labor and doing away with strikes?

BLEE. Arnt the workers enslaved enough already without your depriving them of that last scrap of their liberty? the only weapon they have against the capitalists?

SIR ARTHUR. My dear Mr Mayor, what is the right to strike? The right to starve on your enemy's doorstep and set the whole public against you. Which of you starves first when it comes to the point?

THE MAYOR. I am not going to argue. You can beat me at that. But if you think that the British workingman will listen to compulsory labor and putting down strikes you dont know the world youre living in; and thats all about it.

SIR ARTHUR. But we need not compel the workers to work: they are working already. We shall compel the idlers. Not only your idlers but our idlers: all the idle young gentlemen who do nothing but waste their own time and your labor.

BLEE. We know. Keep all the soft jobs for your lot and the hard ones for us. Do you take us for fools?

BARKING. He does. And you are fools.

SIR ARTHUR. I am glad to have your lordship's support.

ALOYSIA. Support your grandparents! He wants to marry your daughter.

BARKING [*springing up*]. Oh! You can hit below the belt, Aloysia. But as a matter of

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

fact, I do want to marry your daughter, Chavender

SIR ARTHUR Hardly the moment to go into that now, is it?

BARKING It was Aloysia and not I who let the cat out of the bag Being a cat herself she had a fellow-feeling for the animal [*He resumes his seat*]

BLEE You're an aristocrat, young-fellow-me-lad I always said that when things got serious you'd turn on us and side with your own.

BARKING Rot! You're always bragging that you are descended from the Blee of Blayport, whoever he may have been I shouldn't have tuppence in my pocket if my grandfather hadn't made a fortune in pork pies and bought my father's Norman title for his daughter with it The blue blood is in your skumpy little veins the proletarian red's in mine

ALOYSIA You've too much money, Toffy

BARKING I haven't had all the pluck taken out of me by poverty, like you chaps And what good will it do me to have a lot of money when I have to work like anyone else?

SIR DEXTER Why should a man work like anyone else if he has money?

BARKING My brother had heaps of money, but he had to go into the trenches and fight like anyone else in the war That's how I came into the property

BLEE So we're all to be slaves for the sake of setting a few loafers to work The workers will die sooner than put up with it I want my liberty—

BARKING Liberty to work fourteen hours a day and bring up three children on thirty-four shillings a week, like your brother the shopman To hell with your filthy liberty!

BLEE [*holy*] I—

THE MAYOR Order! order! Don't argue with him, Blee No good ever comes of arguing with college men I'm not arguing with Sir Arthur I'm telling him The long and the short of it is that if he don't withdraw that silly new program he'll lose every vote in the Isle of Cats And what the Isle of Cats thinks today, all England thinks tomorrow

SIR JAFNA May I speak to this gentleman?

Will you introduce me, Arthur?

SIR ARTHUR [*introducing*] Sir Jafna Pandranath The Mayor of the Isle of Cats

SIR JAFNA You have heard of me, Mr Mayor You know that I am a man who knows what he is talking about Well, I tell

you that the fundamental question is not the Labor question but the Land Question.

THE MAYOR Yes we all know that SIR JAFNA Then you will vote for Sir Arthur because he will nationalize the land for you

BLEE [*scornfully*] Yes, with compensation! Take the land with one hand and give back its cash value to the landlords with the other! Not likely I ask again, do you take us for fools?

SIR ARTHUR [*introducing*] Mr Alderman Blee

THE DUKE Enchanted I happen to be a landlord—a duke, in fact—and I can assure you, Mr Alderman, that as the compensation will come out of my own pocket and that of my unfortunate fellow landlords in the form of income tax, surtax, and estate duties—what you call death duties—you will get all your cash back and the land as well

THE MAYOR Blee I tell you, don't argue Stick to your point No compensation

BLEE Not a penny, by God

THE DUKE You believe in God, Mr Alderman I am charmed to hear it

Here the Duke is astonished to find Aloysia towering over him and pointing an accusing finger at him At the moment of his introduction of himself as a duke, her eyes lighted up, and she has moved menacingly across the hearth towards him until she is now standing behind the vacant chair between him and Basham

ALOYSIA Have you ever heard of the Domesday Clearances?

THE DUKE Clearances? Which clearances do you refer to? The latest cleared me out of Domesday Towers I can no longer afford to live there

ALOYSIA Don't prevaricate You know very well what I mean It is written in blood and tears on the pages of working class history

SIR ARTHUR [*introducing*] Alderwoman Aloysia Brollikins The Duke of Domesday

THE DUKE [*rising courteously*] Won't you sit down?

ALOYSIA [*sternly*] You shall not put me out by these tricks and ceremonies My Lord Duke I would rather touch the hand of the most degraded criminal in London than touch yours

THE DUKE [*collapsing into his chair*] Great heavens! Why?

ALOYSIA Do you forget how your family drove a whole countryside of honest hard-working Scotch crofters into the sea, and

turned their little farms into deer forests because you could get more shooting rents out of them in that way? Do you forget that women in childbirth were carried out by your bailiffs to die by the roadside because they clung to their ancient homesteads and ignored your infamous notices to quit? Would it surprise you to learn that I am only one of thousands of young women who have read the hideous story of this monstrous orgy of housebreaking and murder, and sworn to ourselves that never, if we can help it, will it again be possible for one wicked rich man to say to a whole population "Get off the earth!"

SIR JAFNA Admirable! What did I tell you? Hear hear!

ALOYSIA I thank you, Sir Jafna, for shewing this man that even hardened capitalist millionaires shudder when that story is told. You will not find it in your school histories, but in the new histories, the histories of the proletariat, it has been written, not by the venal academic triflers you call historians, but by the prophets of the new order. the men in whom the word is like a burning fire shut up in their bones so that they are weary of forbearing and must speak

THE MAYOR. Aye in the Bible, that is.

ALOYSIA The Domesday Clearances filled your pockets with gold to console you for the horror and remorse of your dreams; but the vengeance they cried to God for in vain is upon you now that Labor is coming to its own, and it is your turn now to get off the earth

BLEE And in the face of all this, you come whining for compensation! Compensation! Compensation from us to you! From the oppressed to the oppressor! What a mockery!

ALOYSIA It is from you that we shall exact compensation aye, to the uttermost farthing. You are conspiring here with these capitalist bloodsuckers to rob us again of the value of what you have already stolen—to make us give you gilt edged securities in exchange for the land that no longer brings you in shooting rents; and you think we cannot see through the plot. But in vain is the net spread in sight of the bird. We shall expose you. We shall tell the story of the Domesday Clearances until the country rings with it if you dare to lift your dishonored head again in English politics. Your demand for compensation is dismissed, turned down. we spit it back in your face. The crofters whom you

drove from their country to perish in a foreign land would turn in their graves at the chink of a single penny of public money in your hungry pockets [*She tears out a chair from under the table and flops into it, panting with oratorical emotion*]

BLEE } Good for you, Brolly!
SIR JAFNA } [*enthused*] Hear hear! [*They*
SIR BEMROSE } *hammer on the table with their*
GLENMORISON } *knuckles*]

THE DUKE [*very appreciative*] What a magnificent speech, Miss Brollikins! I really must insist on your shaking hands with me before we part

ALOYSIA Never. How dare you ask me? [*She sweeps away from him and sits down in the opposite chair at the other side of the table*]

THE DUKE [*taking the armchair*] May I not have the privilege of telling my grandchildren how I once met and shook hands with the greatest orator of my time? I assure you all these shocking things happened before I was born

BLEE [*bawling at him*] Yes; but you still pocket the shooting rents

THE DUKE [*brusquely*] Of course I do; and so would you too if you were in my place [*Tenderly, to Aloysia*] I assure you, Miss Brollikins, the people make much more money out of my shooting tenants than they could as crofters. they would not go back to croftering for worlds. Wont you let bygones be bygones—except when you are exercising your wonderful gift of eloquence on the platform? Think of what your ancestors were doing in those ruthless old days!

BARKING Grabbing all they could get, like yours or mine. Whats the good of tubthumping at these johnnies, Brolly? Theyve been doing it themselves all their lives. Cant you see that compensation makes them share the loss fairly between them?

SIR BEMROSE It's no use. These damned Liberals cant understand anything but virtuous indignation

THE MAYOR Who are you calling a Liberal? I represent the Labor Party

SIR BEMROSE Youre a No Compensation man, arnt you?

THE MAYOR Of course I am

SIR BEMROSE Then youre a Liberal.

THE MAYOR Call me what you like. I'm not arguing. I'm telling you that the Labor Party of the Isle of Cats puts down its foot and says No Compensation. Is that plain?

SIR DEXTER. I am glad we have arrived at the same conclusion from our opposite points of view, Mr Mayor. The Party I represent, the Conservative Party, will withdraw from the Coalition if there is the slightest wobbling on this point. We shall defend our property—and yours, yours, Mr Mayor, to the last drop of our blood.

BASHAM [*incisively re-entering the conversation, they had forgotten him, and now turn to him in some surprise*] Our blood, you mean, dont you?

SIR DEXTER [*puzzled*] Whose blood?

BASHAM. The police's blood. You landed gentlemen never do a thing yourselves, you only call us in. I have twenty thousand constables, all full of blood, to shed it in defence of whatever the Government may decide to be your property. If Sir Arthur carries his point they'll shed it for land nationalization. If you carry yours they'll stand by your rent collectors as usual.

BLEE. The police come from the ranks of labor, dont forget that.

BASHAM. That's not how they look at it, Blee. They feel that they've escaped from the ranks of labor, and they're proud of it. They have a status which they feel to be a part of the status of the Duke here.

THE DUKE. I suppose that is why they are always so civil to me.

BASHAM. In short, Mister Blee, the police are what you Socialists call class-conscious. You will find that out if you are foolish enough to fall out with them.

BLEE. Who cut their pay? Tell me that.

SIR ARTHUR. I shall restore the cuts, Mr Alderman, with a premium.

THE MAYOR. There! Now you see what comes of arguing, Blee. It only gives him his chance.

ALOYSIA. You need not warn us, Sir Broadfoot Basham, D.S.O., K.C.M.G., O.B.E. In the Class War your myrmidons will be well paid.

THE DUKE. Myrmidons!

ALOYSIA. We know too well what we have to expect from your Janissaries.

BLEE. Your bludgeoning Bash-Bazouks.

ALOYSIA. The Class War is a fact. We face it. What we want we shall have to take, and we know it. The good of the community is nothing to you; you care only for surplus value. You will never give up your privileges voluntarily. History teaches us that the history you never read.

THE DUKE. I assure you, my dear Héloïse—
ALOYSIA. Héloïse! Who are you calling Héloïse?

THE DUKE. Pardon. I could not resist the French form of your charming name.

ALOYSIA [*interjects*]. The cheek!

THE DUKE [*continuing*]. I was merely going to point out, as between one student of history and another, that in the French Revolution it was the nobility who voluntarily abolished all their own privileges at a single sitting, on the sentimental principles they had acquired from reading the works of Karl Marx's revolutionary predecessor Rousseau. That bit of history is repeating itself today. Here is Sir Arthur offering us a program of what seems to me to be first rate Platonic Communism. I, a Conservative Duke, embrace it. Sir Jafna Pandranath here, a Liberal capitalist whose billions shame my poverty, embraces it. The Navy embraces it with the sturdy arms of Sir Bemrose Hotspot. The police are enthusiastic. The Army will be with Sir Arthur to the last man. He has the whole propertied class on his side. But the proletariat rises against him and spews out his Socialism through the eloquent lips of its Aloysia. I recall the warning my dear old father gave me when I was five years old. Chained dogs are the fiercest guardians of property, and those who attempt to unchain them are the first to be bitten.

ALOYSIA. Your Grace calls us dogs. We shall not forget that.

THE DUKE. I have found no friends better than faithful dogs, Miss Brollikins. But of course I spoke figuratively. I should not dream of calling you a dog.

ALOYSIA. No. As I am a female dog I suppose you will call me something shorter when my back is turned.

THE DUKE. Oh! Think of the names you have called me!

THE MAYOR. Well, if you will argue, Alderwoman Brollikins, there's no use my staying here. I wish I could stop your mouth as easy as I can stop my ears. Sir Arthur, you've planked down your program and we've planked down our answer. Either you drop compulsory labor and drop compensation or never show your face in the Isle of Cats again. [*He goes out resolutely*].

BLEE. Take this from me. I am no Communist. I am a respectable Labor man, as law abiding as any man here. I am what none

of you has mentioned yet a democrat I am just as much against Cabinet dictatorship as individual dictatorship What I want done is the will of the people -I am for the referendum I am for the initiative When a majority of the people are in favor of a measure then I am for that measure

SIR BEMROSE Rot! The majority is never in favor of any measure They dont know what a measure is What they want is their orders, and as much comfort as they are accustomed to The lower deck doesnt want to give orders, it looks to the bridge for them If I asked my men to do my job theyd chuck me overboard, and serve me jolly well right! You just know nothing about it, because youve never had to command, and you havnt sense enough to obey and be thankful to those who have saved you the trouble of thinking for yourself and keeping you off the rocks

BLEE You havnt kept us off the rocks We're on the rocks, the whole lot of us So long, Rosy. [*He goes out*]

BARKING Silly swine! When they are offered what they want they wont have it just because you fellows want it too They think there must be a catch in it somewhere

THE DUKE There generally is That is how you feel, Miss Brollikins, isnt it?

ALOYSIA You dont know how I feel; and you never will We are going to save ourselves and not be saved by you and your class And I prefer Sir Dexter Rightside's downright outspoken opposition to your silly-clever cynicism and your sickening compliments

THE DUKE It is only in middle class books, Miss Brollikins, that noblemen are always cynical and insincere I find you a most brilliant and delightful woman May I not tell you so? And WHAT a speaker! Will you spend a quiet week-end with me in some out-of-the-way place in the country, and let me try to convince you that a duke is a human being like yourself?

ALOYSIA [*rearing*] Are you trying to seduce me?

THE DUKE That would be exquisite, Miss Brollikins; but I am an old and very poor man. You are young, beautiful, and probably opulent Can you find anything seductive about me?

ALOYSIA Yes. Youre a duke And you have the charm of a majestic ruin, if you understand me.

BARKING [*rising*] Come on out of this, Brolly youre only making a fool of yourself listening to that old bird buttering you up You just dont know when to go

ALOYSIA [*moving to the hearthrug, behind Sir Arthur*] You can go if you like. I have some business with Sir Arthur that doesnt concern you Get out

SIR ARTHUR Some business with me! Public business?

ALOYSIA Not exactly.

SIR ARTHUR Oh! Private business?

ALOYSIA I dont care who knows it. But perhaps you would

BARKING. She means to marry your son David One below the belt for you, Brolly Ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha! [*He goes out roaring with laughter*]

SIR ARTHUR [*after a moment of shock*] I congratulate David, Miss Brollikins. Have you arranged the date?

ALOYSIA I havnt mentioned it to him yet. I hope all you gentlemen will remember that I was not the one that blurted this out. it was your noble viscount However, now it's out, I stand by it David is a good boy; and his class is not his fault. Goodbye all [*She goes to the door*]

THE DUKE [*rising*] And that week-end, Miss Brollikins? Or has David cut me out?

ALOYSIA. Right you are, Your Grace! I will call for you at Domesday House on Friday at half past four As I shall bring a few friends we shall hire an omnibus from the London Transport; so you neednt trouble about a car You wont mind my publishing an account of what happens as a special interview you know that we Labor intelligentsia have to live by our brains Au revoir [*She goes out*]

THE DUKE There is a frightful unexpectedness about these people Where on earth shall I borrow the money to pay for the omnibus and entertain them all? [*He goes back to his chair at the end of the table and sits down*].

BASHAM Your share will only be a few shillings, Duke, and she will reckon on having to pay for you What girl in her class wouldnt foot the bill if she had a duke to walk out with?

THE DUKE. You reassure me, Sir Broadfoot. Thank you.

SIR DEXTER [*triumphant*] Well, Chavender? What have you to say now? When these people came in I was saying that though I was alone in this room, the people of England

were on my side and always would be when it came to the point Was I right or wrong?

SIR DEMROSE We never meant to desert you, Dery. You mustnt think that

SIR ARTHUR. As you have no more intention of consulting the people of England than I have, the situation is unaltered.

SIR DEXTER Than you have! What do you mean? Do you think you can govern in this country without the consent of the English people?

SIR ARTHUR No country has ever been governed by the consent of the people, because the people object to be governed at all. Even you, who ought to know better, are always complaining of the income tax

THE DUKE But five shillings in the pound, Arthur! Five shillings in the pound!!

SIR DEXTER Never mind my income tax. If what you said just now means anything it means that you are going to play fast and loose with democracy that is, you think you are going to do something that both the people and the governing class of this country are determined you shall not do. The Conservative Party, which is ten times more really democratic than you Liberals have ever been, will carry the people with it against you. How do you propose to get over that? What are you banking on? Put your cards on the table if you really have any

SIR ARTHUR Well, here is my ace of trumps. The people of this country, and of all the European countries, and of America, are at present sick of being told that, thanks to democracy, they are the real government of the country. They know very well that they dont govern and cant govern and know nothing about Government except that it always supports profiteering, and doesnt really respect anything else, no matter what party flag it waves. They are sick of twaddle about liberty when they have no liberty. They are sick of idling and loafing about on doles when they are not drudging for wages too beggarly to pay the rents of anything better than overcrowded one-room tenements. They are sick of me and sick of you and sick of the whole lot of us. They want to see something done that will give them decent employment. They want to eat and drink the wheat and coffee that the profiteers are burning because they cant sell it at a profit. They want to hang people who burn good food when people are going hungry

They cant set matters right themselves, so they want rulers who will discipline them and make them do it instead of making them do the other thing. They are ready to go mad with enthusiasm for any man strong enough to make them do anything, even if it is only Jew bating, provided it's something tyrannical, something coercive, something that we all pretend no Englishman would submit to, though weve known ever since we gave them the vote that theyd submit to anything

SIR DEXTER [*impatiently*] Yes, yes we know the cant of all the tuppenny-hapenny dictators who think themselves Mussolinis. Come down to tin tacks. How are you going to get it through Parliament?

SIR ARTHUR I am not going to get it through Parliament. I am going to prorogue Parliament and then do it. When it is done I shall call a meeting of Parliament to pass an Act of Indemnity for all my proceedings

SIR DEXTER You cannot prorogue Parliament. Only the King can prorogue Parliament.

SIR ARTHUR Precisely. Kings always have prorogued Parliament and governed without them until money ran short

GLENMORISON But, man alive, it is not His Majesty alone that you have to consider. The law courts will not enforce your decisions if they are illegal. The civil servants will sabotage you even if they dont flatly disobey you

SIR ARTHUR. We shall sidetrack them quite easily by setting up new tribunals and special commissions manned by officials we can depend on

SIR DEXTER That was how Cromwell cut off King Charles's head. His commissioners found out afterwards that they were doing it with ropes round their rascally necks

SIR ARTHUR A rope round a statesman's neck is the only constitutional safeguard that really safeguards. But never fear the rope. As long as we give the people an honest good time we can do just what seems good to us. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating. That will be really responsible government at last

SIR DEXTER So that is your game, is it? Has it occurred to you that two can play at it? What can you do that I cannot do if you drive me to it tell me that.

SIR ARTHUR Nothing, if you are willing to take on my job. Are you?

SIR DEXTER. The job of runing the country and destroying the empire? My job is to prevent you from doing that. And I will prevent you

SIR ARTHUR Your job is to prevent me or anybody else from doing anything Your job is to prevent the world from moving Well, it is moving, and if you dont get out of the way something will break; and it wont be the world.

SIR DEXTER Nothing has broken so far except the heads of the unemployed when they are encouraged by your seditious rot to rebel against the laws of nature England is not breaking She stands foursquare where she always stood and always will stand the strongest and greatest land, and the birth-place of the noblest imperial race, that ever God created.

SIR ARTHUR. Loud and prolonged cheering Come! let us both stop tubthumping and talk business The real master of the situation is Basham here, with his fifteen thousand police

BASHAM. Twenty thousand.

SIR ARTHUR. Well, twenty thousand. They dont stop functioning when Parliament is prorogued, do they?

BASHAM No 'At Scotland Yard we look to the Home Secretary as far as we look to anybody.

SIR ARTHUR I can make myself Home Secretary So that will be all right

SIR DEXTER Will it, by George? If you and Basham dare to try your twenty thousand police on me, do you know what I will do?

SIR ARTHUR What?

SIR DEXTER. I will put fifty thousand patriotic young Londoners into Union Jack shirts You say they want discipline and action. They shall have them They shall have machine guns and automatic pistols and tear gas bombs My Party has the money My Party has the newspapers My Party has the flag, the traditions, the glory that is England, the pluck, the breed, the fighting spirit One of us is worth ten of your half starved guttersnipes and their leaders that never could afford more than a shilling for a dinner until they voted themselves four hundred a year out of our pockets

SIR BEMROSE [*carried away*] Thats the stuff, Dexy. Now you are talking, by Jimmy

BASHAM [*taking command of the discussion coolly*] You are all talking through your hats.

The police can do nothing unless the people are on the side of the police The police cant be everywhere there arnt enough of them As long as the people will call the police when anything goes wrong, and stop the runaway criminal and give evidence against him, then twenty thousand constables can keep eight million citizens in order. But if the citizens regard the policeman as their enemy—if the man who snipes a policeman in the back is not given in charge by the bystanders—if he is helped to get away—if the police cannot get a single citizen to go into the box and witness against him, where are you then? You have to double your force because the police must patrol in pairs otherwise the men will be afraid to patrol at all. Your twenty thousand have to be reinforced up to forty thousand for their own protection, but that doesnt protect you You would have to put two policemen standing over every able-bodied man and woman in the town to see that they behaved themselves as you want them to behave You would need not thousands of constables but millions.

SIR DEXTER. My Union Jack men would keep order, or theyd know the reason why.

BASHAM. And who would keep them in order, I should like to know. silly amateurs And let me remind you of one thing It seems easy to buy a lot of black shirts, or brown shirts, or red shirts, and give one to every hooligan who is out for any sort of mischief and every suburban out-of-work who fancies himself a patriot But dont forget that the colored shirt is a uniform

GLENMORISON What harm is there in that? It enables a man to recognize his friends

BASHAM Yes, but it marks him out as an enemy in uniform; and to kill an enemy in uniform at sight is not murder. it's legitimate warfare.

SIR DEXTER Monstrous! I should give no quarter to such an outrageous piece of sophistry.

BASHAM. In war you have to give quarter because you have to ask for it as often as to give it It's easy to sit here and think of exterminating your opponents But a war of extermination is a massacre How long do you think a massacre would last in England today? Just as long as it takes a drunken man to get sick and sober.

GLENMORISON Easy, Sir Broadfoot, easy, easy. Who is talking of extermination? I

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

dont think you will ever induce respectable Britons to wear red-white-and-blue shirts, but surely you can have volunteers, special constables, auxiliary forces—

BASHAM [*finching violently*] Auxiliary forces! I was in command of them in Ireland when you tried that game on the Irish, who were only a little handful of peasants in their cabbage patch I have seen these things I have done them I know all about it you know nothing about it It means extermination, and when it comes to the point you cant go through with it I couldnt. I resigned You couldnt you had to back down And I tell you, Dexy, if you try any colored shirt hooch-gamism on me, I'll back the P M and shew you what Scotland Yard can do when it's put to it

SIR DEXTER Traitor!

BASHAM Liar! Now weve called one another names how much farther has it got us?

GLENMORISON Easy, easy dont let us quarrel I must support the Prime Minister, Sir Dexter, to secure my seat in Parliament But I am a Liberal, and, as such, bound by Liberal principles Whatever we do must be done through Parliament if I am to be a party to it I am all for the new program, but we must draw up a parliamentary timetable for it To carry out the program will involve the introduction of at least twelve bills They are highly controversial and obstructed to the very last clause You may have to go to the country on several of them The committee stages will last for weeks and weeks, no matter how hard you work the guillotine there will be thousands of amendments Then, when you have got through what is left of your Bill and carried it, the House of Lords will turn it down, and you will have to wait two years and go through the whole job again before you can get your Bill on the statute book as an Act of Parliament. This program is not a matter of today or tomorrow I calculate that at the very least it will take fifty years to get it through

SIR ARTHUR And you think the world will wait for that, Sandy?

GLENMORISON [*naively*] What else can it do?

SIR ARTHUR It wont wait Unless we can find a shorter way, the program will be fought out in the streets

SIR DEXTER And you think that in the streets you will win? You think the mob will

be on your side? "Ye are many they are few" eh? The Class War! Well, you will find out your mistake

SIR ARTHUR I dont believe in the Class War any more than you do, Dexy I know that half the working class is slaving away to pile up riches, only to be smoked out like a hive of bees and plundered of everything but a bare living by our class But what is the other half doing? Living on the plunder at second hand Plundering the plunderers As fast as we fill our pockets with rent and interest and profits theyre emptied again by West End tradesmen and hotel keepers, fashionable doctors and lawyers and parsons and fiddlers and portrait painters and all sorts, to say nothing of huntsmen and stable-men and gardeners, valets and gamekeepers and jockeys, butlers and housekeepers and ladies' maids and scullery maids and deuce knows who not

THE DUKE How true, Arthur! how profoundly true! I am with you there to the last drop of my blood

SIR ARTHUR Well, these parasites will fight for the rights of property as they would fight for their own skins Can you get a Labor member into Parliament in the places where they are in a majority? No there is no class war the working class is hopelessly divided against itself But I will tell you what there is There is the gulf between Dexy's view of the world and mine There is the eternal war between those who are in the world for what they can get out of it and those who are in the world to make it a better place for everybody to live in

SIR DEXTER [*rising*] I will not sit here listening to this disgusting ungentlemanly nonsense Chavender the coalition is dissolved I resign I shall take with me three quarters of the Cabinet I shall expose the shamelessly corrupt motives of those who have supported you here today Basham you will get the sack the day after the King sends for me Domesday you have gone gaga go home to bed and drivel where your dotage can do no harm Rosy you are a damned fool, and you ought to know it by this time Pandranath you are only a silly nigger pretending to be an English gentleman you are found out Good afternoon, gentlemen

He goes out, leaving an atmosphere of awe behind him, in which the Indian is choking with indignation, and for the moment muticulate

SIR BEMROSE This is awful We cannot do without him

SIR JAFNA [*finding his tongue*] I am despised. I am called nigger by this dirty faced barbarian whose forefathers were naked savages worshipping acorns and mistletoe in the woods whilst my people were spreading the highest enlightenment yet reached by the human race from the temples of Brahma the thousandfold who is all the gods in one This primitive savage dares to accuse me of imitating him me, with the blood in my veins of conquerors who have swept through continents vaster than a million dogholes like this island of yours They founded a civilization compared to which your little kingdom is no better than a concentration camp. What you have of religion came from the east, yet no Hindu, no Parsee, no Jain, would stoop to its crudities Is there a mirror here? Look at your faces and look at the faces of my people in Ceylon, the cradle of the human race There you see Man as he came from the hand of God, who has left on every feature the unmistakable stamp of the great original creative artist There you see Woman with eyes in her head that mirror the universe instead of little peepholes filled with faded pebbles. Set those features, those eyes, those burning colors beside the miserable smudged lumps of half baked dough, the cheap commercial copies of a far away gallery of masterpieces that you call western humanity, and tell me, if you dare, that you are the original and I the imitation Do you not fear the lightning? the earthquake? the vengeance of Vishnu? You call me nigger, sneering at my color because you have none The jackdaw has lost his tail and would persuade the world that his defect is a quality You have all cringed to me, not for my greater nearness to God, but for my money and my power of making money and ever more money But today your hatred, your envy, your insolence has betrayed itself I am nigger. I am bad imitation of that eater of unclean foods, never sufficiently washed in his person or his garments, a British islander I will no longer bear it. The veil of your hypocrisy is rent by your own mouths I should dishonor my country and my race by remaining here where both have been insulted Until now I have supported the connection between India and England because I knew that in the course of nature and by the justice of Brahma it must

end in India ruling England just as I, by my wealth and my brains, govern this roomful of needy imbeciles But I now cast you off I return to India to detach it wholly from England, and leave you to perish in your ignorance, your vain conceit, and your abominable manners Good morning, gentlemen. To hell with the lot of you [*He goes out and slams the door*]

SIR ARTHUR That one word nigger will cost us India How could Dexy be such a fool as to let it slip!

SIR BEMROSE [*very serious—rising solemnly*] Arthur I feel I cannot overlook a speech like that After all, we are white men

SIR ARTHUR You are not, Rosy, I assure you. You are walnut color, with a touch of claret on the nose Glenmorison is the color of his native oatmeal not a touch of white on him The fairest man present is the Duke He's as yellow as a Malayan headhunter The Chinese call us Pinks. They flatter us

SIR BEMROSE I must tell you, Arthur, that frivolity on a vital point like this is in very bad taste. And you know very well that the country cannot do without Dexy Dexy was at school with me before I went to Dartmouth To desert him would be for me not only an act of political bad faith but of personal bad feeling I must go and see him at once [*He goes very sadly to the door*]

SIR ARTHUR. Make my apologies to Sir Jafna if you overtake him How are we to hold the empire together if we insult a man who represents nearly seventy per cent of its population?

SIR BEMROSE I dont agree with you, Arthur. It is for Pandy to apologize Dexy really shares the premiership with you, and if a Conservative Prime Minister of England may not take down a heathen native when he forgets himself there is an end of British supremacy.

SIR ARTHUR For Heaven's sake dont call him a native You are a native

SIR BEMROSE [*very solemnly*] Of Kent, Arthur of Kent Not of Ceylon [*He goes out*]

GLENMORISON. I think I'd better clear out too I can make allowances for Sir Dexter he is an Englishman, and has not been trained to use his mind like us in Scotland But that is just what gives him such a hold on the Country We must face it he's indispensable. I'll just go and assure him that we have no intention of breaking with him Ta ta Good

morning, Duke [*He goes out*]

SIR ARTHUR [*rising and strolling round to the other side of the table like a cleaned-out gambler*]
That finishes me, I'm afraid

He throws himself into the middle chair Basham rises moodily and goes to the window to contemplate the street The Duke comes sympathetically to Sir Arthur and sits down beside him

THE DUKE Oh Arthur, my dear Arthur, why didnt you play golf on your holiday instead of thinking? Didnt you know that English politics wont bear thinking about? Didnt you know that as a nation we have lost the trick of thinking? Hadnt you noticed that though in our great British Constitution there is a department for everything else in the world almost—for agriculture and health and fisheries, for home affairs and foreign affairs and education, for the Exchequer and the Treasury and even the Chiltern Hundreds and the Duchy of Lancaster—we have no department for thinking? The Russians have a special Cabinet for it, and it has knocked the whole place to pieces Where should you and I be in Russia today? [*He resumes his seat with a hopeless shrug*]

SIR ARTHUR. In our proper place, the dustbin Yet they got their ideas from us Karl Marx thought it all out in Bloomsbury Lenin learnt his lesson in Holford Square, Islington Why can we never think out anything, nor learn any lessons? I see what has to be done now, but I dont feel that I am the man to do it

THE DUKE Of course not Not a gentleman's job

SIR ARTHUR It might be a duke's job, though Why not have a try at it?

THE DUKE For three reasons, Arthur First, I'm not built that way Second, I'm so accustomed as a duke to be treated with the utmost deference that I simply dont know how to assert myself and bully people Third, I'm so horribly hard up for pocket money without knowing how to do without it that I've lost all my self-respect This job needs a man with nothing to lose, plenty of hard driving courage, and a complete incapacity for seeing any side of a question but his own. A mere hereditary duke would be no use When Domesday Towers is sold to an American I shall have no family seat left, and must fall back on my political seat, which is at present on the fence From that eminence I shall encourage the dictator when he arrives as far as I can without committing myself

dangerously Sorry I can be of no use to you, my dear Arthur

SIR ARTHUR What about you, Basham? You are a man of action

BASHAM I have a jolly good mund to go to the King and make him take the bit between his teeth and arrest the lot of you

SIR ARTHUR Do, Basham, do You couldnt make a worse hash of things than we have

THE DUKE Theres nothing to prevent you Look at Kemal Pasha! Look at Mussolini! Look at Hitler! Look at De Valera! Look at Franklin Roosevelt!

BASHAM If only I had ambition enough I'd think very seriously over it As it is, I'll go back quietly to Scotland Yard [*He is going out when he is confronted in the doorway by Hipney*] Hallo! What the devil are you doing here?

SIR ARTHUR I am afraid you are late, Mr Hipney The deputation has been here They have all gone

HIPNEY [*seating himself beside Sir Arthur with his usual calm*] I came with them, Srarthur I been listening on the quiet as you might say I just come in to tell you not to mind that parliamentary lot Theyre all the same, west end or east end, parkside or riverside Theyll never do anything They dont want to do anything

BASHAM [*sitting down again in Hilda's chair*] Hipney I may as well tell you that I have had my eye on you for some time Take care I have no objection to your calling yourself a revolutionary Socialist they all do that But I suspect you of really meaning business

HIPNEY I do, Sir Broadfoot I do And if Srarthur means business, then let him come out of Parliament and keep out It will take the life out of him and leave him a walking talking shell of a man with nothing inside The only man that ever had a proper understanding of Parliament was old Guy Fawkes

SIR ARTHUR But even if he had blown that Parliament up, they would just have elected another

HIPNEY Yes, but it was a sort of gesture as you might say Symbolic, I call it. Mark my words some day there will be a statue to old Guy in Westminster on the site of the present House of Commons

THE DUKE Democracy, Arthur, democracy This is what it ends in

SIR ARTHUR [*introducing*] His Grace the Duke of Domesday, Mr Hipney

HIPNEY Bless you, I know his Grace About town, as you might say, though we've never been introduced

THE DUKE Very much honored, Mr Hipney

HIPNEY No great honor, your Grace But old Hipney can tell you something about Democracy at first hand. Democracy was a great thing when I was young and we had no votes We talked about public opinion and what the British people would stand and what they wouldn't stand. And it had weight, I tell you, sir. it held Governments in check it frightened the stoutest of the tyrants and the bosses and the police it brought a real reverence into the voices of great orators like Bright and Gladstone But that was when it was a dream and a vision, a hope and a faith and a promise. It lasted until they dragged it down to earth, as you might say, and made it a reality by giving everybody votes. The moment they gave the working men votes they found that they'd stand anything They gave votes to the women and found they were worse than the men; for men would vote for men—the wrong men, but men all the same—but the women wouldn't even vote for women Since then politics have been a laughing stock Parliamentary leaders say one thing on Monday and just the opposite on Wednesday, and nobody notices any difference They put down the people in Egypt, in Ireland, and in India with fire and sword, with floggings and hangings, burning the houses over their heads and bombing their little stores for the winter out of existence; and at the next election they'd be sent back to Parliament by working class constituencies as if they were plaster saints, while men and women like me, that had spent their lives in the service of the people, were booted out at the polls like convicted criminals. It wasn't that the poor silly sheep did it on purpose They didn't notice they didn't remember. they couldn't understand they were taken in by any nonsense they heard at the meetings or read in the morning paper You could stampede them by crying out that the Russians were coming, or rally them by promising them to hang the Kaiser, or Lord knows what silliness that shouldn't have imposed on a child of four. That was the end of democracy for me; though there was no man alive that had hoped as much from it, nor spoke deeper from his heart about all the good things that would happen when the people

came to their own and had votes like the gentry Adult suffrage that was what was to save us all My God! It delivered us into the hands of our spoilers and oppressors, bound hand and foot by our own folly and ignorance. It took the heart out of old Hipney; and now I'm for any Napoleon or Mussolini or Lenin or Chavender that has the stuff in him to take both the people and the spoilers and oppressors by the scruffs of their silly necks and just sling them into the way they should go with as many kicks as may be needful to make a thorough job of it

BASHAM A dictator eh? That's what you want

HIPNEY Better one dictator standing up responsible before the world for the good and evil he does than a dirty little dictator in every street responsible to nobody, to turn you out of your house if you don't pay him for the right to exist on the earth, or to fire you out of your job if you stand up to him as a man and an equal You can't frighten me with a word like dictator. Me and my like has been dictated to all our lives by swine that have nothing but a snout for money, and think the world is coming to an end if anybody but themselves is given the power to do anything

SIR ARTHUR Steady, Mr Hipney, steady! Don't empty the baby out with the bath If the people are to have no voice in the government and no choice of who is to govern them, it will be bad for the people

HIPNEY Let 'em have a voice. Let 'em have a choice They've neither at present But let it be a voice to squeal with when they're hurt, and not to pretend they know more than God Almighty does. Give 'em a choice between qualified men there's always more than one pebble on the beach, but let them be qualified men and not windbags and movie stars and soldiers and rich swankers and lawyers on the make How are they to tell the difference between any cheap Jack and Solomon or Moses? The Jews didn't elect Moses he just told them what to do and they did it. Look at the way they went wrong the minute his back was turned! If you want to be a leader of the people, Sir Arthur, you've got to elect yourself by giving us a lead Old Hipney will follow anyone that will give him a good lead, and to blazes with your elections and your Constitution and your Democracy and all the rest of it!

THE DUKE The police wont let him, Mr Hipney

BASHAM [*rising and planting himself between Hipney and Sir Arthur*] Ha ha ha! Dont be too sure of that I might come down on your side, Arthur, if I spotted you as a winner Meanwhile, Hipney, I have my eye on you as a dangerous character

SIR ARTHUR And on me?

BASHAM You dont matter he does If the proletariat comes to the top things will be more comfortable for Hipney, but they wont be more comfortable for you His heart is in the revolution you have only your head in it Your wife wouldnt like it his would, if he has one

HIPNEY Not me I'm under no woman's thumb She's dead, and the children are grown up and off my hands I'm free at last to put my neck in a noose if I like

BASHAM I wonder should I find any bombs in your house if I searched it

HIPNEY You would if you put them there first, Sir Broadfoot What good would a police chief be if he couldnt find anything he wanted to find?

BASHAM Thats a suggestion, Hipney, certainly Isnt it rather rash of you to put it into my head?

HIPNEY There's plenty to put it into your head if I didnt You could do it if you liked, and you know it, Sir Broadfoot. But perhaps your conscience wouldnt let you

BASHAM Perhaps

HIPNEY [*rising with a chuckle*] Aha! [*Impressively*] You take it from me, you three gentlemen all this country or any country has to stand between it and blue hell is the consciences of them that are capable of governing it

THE DUKE [*rising*] Mr Hipney I find myself in complete agreement with you Will you lunch with me at the Carlton?

HIPNEY No them big clubs is too promiscuous for the like of you and me You come and lunch with me I know a nice little place where the cooking's good and the company really select You wont regret it come along Morning, Sir Arthur Morning, Boss [*He goes out, greatly pleased*]

SIR ARTHUR AND BASHAM [*simultaneously*] Morning Morning

THE DUKE You would never have got rid of him, Arthur, if I hadn't made that move Goodbye Goodbye, Sir Broadfoot. *He goes*

to the door]

BASHAM Goodbye I wish you joy of your host

THE DUKE You dont appreciate him He is absolutely unique

BASHAM In what way, pray?

THE DUKE He is the only politician I ever met who had learnt anything from experience [*he goes out*]

BASHAM [*making for the door*] Well, I must be off to the Yard The unemployed are going to have a general election to amuse them I suppose youll be off to your constituency right away

SIR ARTHUR [*rising*] No I am not going to stand

BASHAM [*returning to him in amazement*] Not stand! What do you mean? You cant chalk up a program like that and then run away

SIR ARTHUR I am through with parliament It has wasted enough of my life

BASHAM Dont tell me you are going to take your politics into the street You will only get your head broken

SIR ARTHUR Never fear your fellows wont break my head they have too much respect for an ex-Prime Minister But I am not going into the streets I am not a man of action, only a talker Until the men of action clear out the talkers we who have social consciences are at the mercy of those who have none, and that, as old Hipney says, is blue hell. Can you find a better name for it?

BASHAM Blackguardocracy, I should call it.

SIR ARTHUR Do you believe in it? I dont

BASHAM It works all right up to a point Dont run your head against it until the men of action get you past that point Bye bye

SIR ARTHUR. Bye bye I wont

Basham goes out through the main door Sir Arthur drops into his chair again and looks rather sick, with his elbows on his knees and his temples on his fists Barking and Miss Brollikans break into the room simultaneously by the private door, struggling for precedence Sir Arthur straightens up wearily

BARKING I was here first You get out and wait for your turn.

ALOYSIA Ladies first, if you please Sir Arthur—

BARKING [*barring her way with an arm of iron*] Ladies be damned! youre no lady [*He comes past the table to Sir Arthur's right*] Sir Arthur I have proposed for the hand of your daughter Flavia, and all I can get out of her

is that she is not a gold digger, and wouldnt be seen at a wedding with a lousy viscount She wants to marry a poor man I said I'd go over her head straight to you You cant let her miss so good a match Exert your authority Make her marry me

SIR ARTHUR Certainly I'll order her to marry you if you think that will get you any further Go and tell her so, like a good boy I'm busy

BARKING. Righto! [*he dashes out through the masked door*].

SIR ARTHUR Sit down, Miss Brollikins [*She comes round to Hipney's chair, and Sir Arthur takes the Duke's chair*] Have you consulted David?

ALOYSIA [*sitting down rather forlornly*] Of course I have. But he's obstinate. He wont look at it the right way

SIR ARTHUR Did he object? He should have jumped at it

ALOYSIA. Its very nice of you to say so if you really mean it, Sir Arthur But he has no sense He objects to my name He says it's ridiculous

SIR ARTHUR. But your marriage will change it

ALOYSIA Yes; but he says it would be in The Times in the births marriages and deaths Chavender and Brollikins My name's not good enough for him. You should have heard what he said about it

SIR ARTHUR I hope he did not use the adjective his sister applied to poor young Barking's title

ALOYSIA Yes he did The language you West End people use! I'm sure I dont know where you pick it up

SIR ARTHUR It doesnt mean anything, Miss Brollikins You mustnt mind

ALOYSIA. Would you mind calling me Aloysia, Sir Arthur? You can call me Brolly if you like, but I prefer Aloysia

SIR ARTHUR Certainly, Aloysia.

ALOYSIA Thank you I wish I could get rid of Brollikins I'd never stoop to be ashamed of my name; but I cant deny there's something funny about it I'm not to blame for that, am I?

SIR ARTHUR But you can get rid of it quite easily You can take a new name any name you like, by deed poll It costs only ten pounds, and David would have to pay it if it was on his account you changed What about Bolingbroke [*he pronounces it Bullingbrook*]?

Bolingbroke would be rather a nice name for The Times; and you wouldnt have to change your initials No bother about your clothes at the laundry, for instance

ALOYSIA Thank you, Sir Arthur thats a practical suggestion At any rate it will shut David up if he talks about my name again

SIR ARTHUR Well, now you can run off and marry him

ALOYSIA But thats not all, Sir Arthur He's such a queer boy He says he's never loved anyone but his sister, and that he hates his mother.

SIR ARTHUR He had no right to tell you that he hates his mother, because as a matter of fact he doesnt Young people nowadays read books about psycho-analysis and get their heads filled with nonsense

ALOYSIA Of course I know all about psycho-analysis I explained to him that he was in love with his mother and was jealous of you The Edipus complex, you know

SIR ARTHUR And what did he say to that?

ALOYSIA He told me to go to Jericho But I shall teach him manners

SIR ARTHUR. Do, Aloysia. Did he make any further objection?

ALOYSIA Well, he says his people couldnt stand my relatives

SIR ARTHUR. Tut! the young snob! Still, snobbery is a very real thing he made a point there, Aloysia. How did you meet it?

ALOYSIA I said my people couldnt stand his relatives; and no more they could I said I wasnt asking him to marry my relatives, nor was I proposing to marry his

SIR ARTHUR And what did he say to that?

ALOYSIA He told me to go to hell He's like that, you know

SIR ARTHUR. Yes, a hasty boy.

ALOYSIA He is, just that But I shall cure him of it.

SIR ARTHUR [*gravely*] Take care, Aloysia. All young women begin by believing they can change and reform the men they marry. They cant If you marry David he will remain David and nobody else til death do you part If he tells you to go to hell today instead of trying to argue with you, he will do the same on the morning of your silver wedding.

ALOYSIA [*grimly*] We shall see

SIR ARTHUR May I ask whether this match is your idea or David's? So far I do not gather that he has expressed any strong feeling of

—of—shall I say devotion?—to you

ALOYSIA We have discussed all that.

SIR ARTHUR Satisfactorily?

ALOYSIA I suppose so. You see, Sir Arthur, I am not like David. I am a reading thinking modern woman, and I know how to look at these things objectively and scientifically. You know the way you meet thousands of people and they mean nothing to you sexually—you wouldn't touch one of them with a barge pole. Then all of a sudden you pick out one, and feel sexy all over. If he's not nice you feel ashamed of yourself and run away. But if he is nice you say "That's the man for me." You have had that experience yourself, haven't you?

SIR ARTHUR Quite. The moment I saw Lady Chavender I said "That's the woman for me."

ALOYSIA Well, the moment I laid eyes on David I went all over like that. You can't deny that he is a nice boy in spite of his awful language. So I said—

SIR ARTHUR "David's the man for me"?

ALOYSIA No. I said "Evolution is telling me to marry this youth." That feeling is the only guide I have to the evolutionary appetite.

SIR ARTHUR The what??

ALOYSIA The evolutionary appetite. The thing that wants to develop the race. If I marry David we shall develop the race. And that's the great thing in marriage, isn't it?

SIR ARTHUR My dear Aloysia, the evolutionary appetite may be a guide to developing the race, but it doesn't care a rap for domestic happiness. I have known the most remarkable children come of the most dreadfully unsuitable and unhappy marriages.

ALOYSIA We have to take our chance of that, Sir Arthur. Marriage is a lottery. I think I can make David as happy as anybody ever is in this—

SIR ARTHUR In this wicked world. Ah yes. Well, I won't press that.

ALOYSIA I was about to say "in the capitalist phase of social development." I don't talk like your grandmother, if you will excuse me saying so.

SIR ARTHUR I beg your pardon. I suppose I do. Have you explained this evolutionary view of the situation to David?

ALOYSIA Of course I have. I don't treat him—a child.

SIR ARTHUR And what did he say?

ALOYSIA He told me to go and— Oh, I

really cannot repeat what he told me to go and do. But you see how familiar we are together. I couldn't bear his being distant with me. He talks just as if we were married already.

SIR ARTHUR Quite. But does he feel about you as you feel about him? Has he picked you out from among the thousand ladies to whom he is indifferent? To use your own expression, does he come all over like that in your presence?

ALOYSIA He does when I get hold of him. He needs educating in these matters. I have to awaken David. But he's coming along nicely.

SIR ARTHUR Well, if it must be it must be. I shall not withhold my blessing. That is all I can say. [*He rises. She does the same and prepares to go.*] You see, Aloysia, the effete society in which I move is based on the understanding that we shall all speak and behave in the manner in which we are expected to behave. We are helpless when this understanding is violated. We don't know what to say or what to do. Well, you have violated it recklessly. What you have said has been unexpected to the last possible degree—

ALOYSIA It has been true.

SIR ARTHUR That is the climax of unexpectedness in polite society. Therefore I am at a loss. Apparently my son was not at a loss. He knows how to deal with you. I do not. I must really refer you back to him for further consideration and report.

They are about to shake hands when Lady Chavender comes in through the masked door.

LADY CHAVENDER Still here, Miss Brollickins! I thought you had gone. [*She comes past the table to Sir Arthur's right.*]

SIR ARTHUR She wants to marry David, my dear.

LADY CHAVENDER [*calmly*] Very naturally. I think if I were in Miss Brollickins' position I should want to marry David.

ALOYSIA I know your class point of view, Lady Chavender. You think it would be a big catch for me and a come-down for him.

LADY CHAVENDER We both know that point of view, Miss Brollickins, but it is you, not I, that have mentioned it. Won't you sit down? [*She sits down herself in the nearest chair.*]

ALOYSIA [*murmurs*] I was just going. [*She resumes her seat.*]

Sir Arthur also sits.

LADY CHAVENDER I daresay a match with

you might be a very good thing for David. You seem to have all the qualities in which he is deficient. And he has been declaring for some months past that if he ever marries he will marry a factory girl.

ALOYSIA. Well, I have been a factory girl. I started as a school teacher; but when they cut my salary I went into the factory. I organized the girls there, and became a trade union secretary. Wherever I went I rose because I couldn't keep down. But I am proletarian, bone and blood, if that's what David wants.

LADY CHAVENDER. Nobody is that in England, Miss Brollikins. We have never had a noble caste: our younger sons have always been commoners.

SIR ARTHUR. Yes, Aloysia: all British blood is blue.

ALOYSIA. Well, call it what you like. All I say is that I belong to the common working people and am proud of it, and that is what David wants, isn't it?

LADY CHAVENDER. What I said was that he wants to marry a factory girl. But I do not know what his attitude will be when a factory girl wants to marry him. Have you proposed to him?

SIR ARTHUR. Yes. He told her to go to hell.

LADY CHAVENDER. David has rather a habit of telling people to go to hell when he is too lazy to think of anything better to say. Miss Brollikins is a resolute and successful young woman. David is an irresolute and unsuccessful young man. If she has made up her mind to marry him she will probably succeed. She will have to support him; but I daresay she can do that as easily as she can support herself.

ALOYSIA. I shall expect him to work for his living.

LADY CHAVENDER. Marriage seldom fulfils all our expectations. You don't know David yet.

ALOYSIA. I will find him a job and see that he does it. I will interest him in it.

SIR ARTHUR. Splendid!

ALOYSIA [puzzled]. But I can't make out you two. You haven't flared up as I thought you might, but are you for me or against me?

LADY CHAVENDER. Miss Brollikins. I am sorry, but there are two things that I cannot bring myself to take the smallest interest in: parliamentary affairs and love affairs. They

both bore me to distraction.

ALOYSIA [to Sir Arthur]. Well, don't you take an interest in David?

SIR ARTHUR. David is at the age at which young men have to break loose from their fathers. They are very sensitive about being interfered with at that age. He would regard my taking an interest in him as parental tyranny. Therefore I am particularly careful not to take any interest in him.

ALOYSIA [rising]. Well, you preach at me because my conversation is unexpected; but you two are the most unexpected lot I have ever been up against. What am I to understand? Will you play fan and let David take his own way?

SIR ARTHUR [rising]. We will even let him take your way if he wishes, Aloysia.

LADY CHAVENDER [rising]. You may leave me out of the question, Miss Brollikins. It is not my business, but my son's. I am neither his enemy nor yours.

ALOYSIA [perplexed]. But do you think I ought to marry him?

LADY CHAVENDER. Nobody ought to marry anybody, Aloysia. But they do.

ALOYSIA. Well, thank you for calling me Aloysia, anyhow. It's about all the satisfaction I have got here.

She is about to go when David breaks in obstreperously through the masked door, and strides between the table and the window to Aloysia's left.

DAVID. Look here, Aloysia. What are you up to here? If you think you can get round me by getting round my parents, you're very much mistaken. My parents don't care a damn what I do as long as I take myself off their hands. And I won't be interfered with. Do you hear? I won't be interfered with.

ALOYSIA. Your parents are too good for you, you uncivilized lout. You've put me right off it by talking that way in front of your mother. If I was your mother I'd smack some manners into you.

DAVID [appalled and imploring]. Aloysia! [He tries to take her in his arms.]

ALOYSIA. Take your dirty hands off me [she flings him off]. It's off, I tell you, off. Goodbye all [She storms out through the main door.]

DAVID [in loud lament to his mother]. You've ruined my whole life [He goes in pursuit, crying]. Aloysia, Aloysia, wait a moment. [With anguished intensity] Aloysia [His cries recede in the distance.]

LADY CHAVENDER }
SIR ARTHUR } *simultaneously* { He might do worse
He might do worse

LADY CHAVENDER. I beg your pardon What did you say?

SIR ARTHUR. I said he might do worse

LADY CHAVENDER That is what I said David is overbred he is so fine-drawn that he is good for nothing, and he is not strong enough physically Our breed needs to be crossed with the gutter or the soil once in every three or four generations Uncle Theodore married his cook on principle, and his wife was my favorite aunt Brollikins may give me goose flesh occasionally, but she wont bore me as a lady daughter-in-law would. I shall be always wondering what she will say or do next If she were a lady I'd always know I am so tired of wellbred people, and party politics, and the London season, and all the rest of it

SIR ARTHUR. I sometimes think you are the only really revolutionary revolutionist I have ever met.

LADY CHAVENDER Oh, lots of us are like that We were born into good society; and we are through with it we have no illusions about it, even if we are fit for nothing better I dont mind Brollikins one bit

SIR ARTHUR What about Barking?

LADY CHAVENDER I—

Barking enters through the masked door, jubilant He comes between the pair as they rise, and claps them both on the shoulders right and left simultaneously They flinch violently, and stare at him in outraged amazement.

BARKING Good news, old dears! It's all right about Flavia We may put up the banns Hooray! [*He rubs hands gleefully*]

SIR ARTHUR. May I ask how you have got over her craze for marrying a poor man?

BARKING Oh, that was a girlish illusion You see, she had a glimpse today, at the unemployed meeting, of what poor men are really like They were awfully nice to her That did the trick. You see, what she craved for before was their rough manners, their violence, their brutality and filthy language, their savage treatment of their women folk. That was her ideal of a delightful husband. She found today that the working man doesnt realize it I do I am a real he-man. I called her the foulest names until she gave in She's a dear We shall be perfectly happy

Good old mother-in-law [*He kisses Lady Chavender, who is too astounded to resist or speak*] Tootle loo, Chavender [*He slaps him on the shoulder*] I am off to buy her a lot of presents [*He dashes out through the main door*]

SIR ARTHUR So thats that

LADY CHAVENDER The brute! How dare he kiss me? [*She rubs the place with her handkerchief*]

SIR ARTHUR Do you realize that we two are free at last? Free, dearest think of that! No more children Free to give up living in a big house and to spend the remainder of our lives as we please A cottage near a good golf links seems to be indicated What would you like?

LADY CHAVENDER But your political career? Are you really going to give up that?

SIR ARTHUR. It has given me up, dearest Arnt you glad?

LADY CHAVENDER Arthur I cant bear this

SIR ARTHUR Cant bear what?

LADY CHAVENDER To see you discouraged. You have never been discouraged before you have always been so buoyant If this new departure is to do nothing for you but take away your courage and high spirits and selfconfidence, then in Heaven's name go back to your old way of life I will put up with anything rather than see you unhappy That sort of unhappiness kills, and if you die I'll die too [*She throws herself into a chair and hides her face on the table*]

SIR ARTHUR Dont fuss, dearest I'm not unhappy I am enjoying the enormous freedom of having found myself out and got myself off my mind That looks like despair, but it is really the beginning of hope, and the end of hypocrisy Do you think I didnt know, in the days of my great speeches and my roaring popularity, that I was only whitewashing the slums? I did it very well—I dont care who hears me say so—and there is always a sort of artistic satisfaction in doing a thing very well, whether it's getting a big Bill through the House, or carrying a big meeting off its feet, or winning a golf championship It was all very jolly, and I'm still a little proud of it But even if I had not had you here to remind me that it was all hot air, I couldnt help knowing as well as any of those damned Socialists that though the West End of London was chockful of money and nice people all calling one another by their Christian names, the lives of the millions of

people whose labor was keeping the whole show going were not worth living. I knew it quite well, but I was able to put it out of my mind because I thought it couldn't be helped and I was doing the best that could be done. I know better now. I know that it can be helped, and how it can be helped. And rather than go back to the old whitewashing job, I'd seize you tight round the waist and make a hole in the river with you.

LADY CHAVENDER [*rising*] Then why, dearest love, don't you—

SIR ARTHUR. Why don't I lead the revolt against it all? Because I'm not the man for the job, darling, and nobody knows that better than you. And I shall hate the man who will carry it through for his cruelty and the desolation he will bring on us and our like.

Shouting, as of an excited mob suddenly surging into the street, and a sound of breaking glass and police whistling

LADY CHAVENDER. What on earth is that?

Hilda comes from her office and runs to the window.

LADY CHAVENDER [*joining her*] What is going on, Hilda?

HILDA. The unemployed have broken into Downing Street; and they're breaking the windows of the Colonial Office. They think this side is only private houses.

SIR ARTHUR [*going to see*] Yes, they always break the wrong windows, poor devils!

HILDA. Oh! here come the mounted police.

SIR ARTHUR. They've splendid horses, those fellows.

HILDA. The people are all running away. And they can't get out—they're in a cul-de-sac. Oh, why don't they make a stand, the cowards?

LADY CHAVENDER. Indeed I hope they won't. What are you thinking of, Hilda?

SIR ARTHUR. Men are like that, Hilda. They always run away when they have no discipline and no leader.

HILDA. Well, but can't the police let them run away without breaking their heads? Oh look, that policeman has just clubbed a quite old man.

SIR ARTHUR. Come away, it's not a nice sight [*He draws her away, placing himself between her and the window*].

HILDA. It's all right when you only read about it in the papers; but when you actually see it you want to throw stones at the police.

Defiant singing through the tumult.

LADY CHAVENDER [*looking out*] Someone has opened the side gate and let them through into the Horse Guards Parade. They are trying to sing.

SIR ARTHUR. What are they singing? The Red Flag?

LADY CHAVENDER. No, I don't know the tune. I caught the first two words. "England, arise."

HILDA [*suddenly hysterical*] Oh, my God! I will go out and join them [*she rushes out through the main door*].

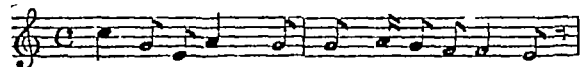
LADY CHAVENDER. Hilda! Hilda!

SIR ARTHUR. Never mind, dear. The police all know her; she'll come to no harm. She'll be back for tea. But what she felt just now other girls and boys may feel tomorrow. And just suppose—!

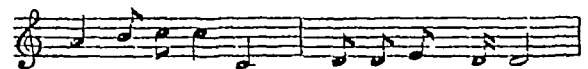
LADY CHAVENDER. What?

SIR ARTHUR. Suppose England really did arise!

Unemployed England, however, can do nothing but continue to sing, as best it can to a percussion accompaniment of baton thwacks, Edward Carpenter's verses



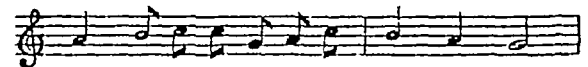
f Eng-land, a-rise! the long, long night is o-ver,



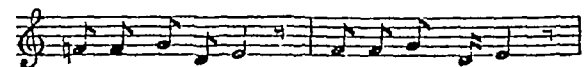
Faint in the east be-hold the dawn ap-pear,



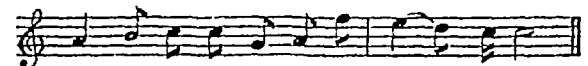
Out of your e-vil dream of toil and sor-row—



A-rise, O Eng-land, for the day is here,



p From your fields and hills, Hark! the an-swer swells—



f A-rise, O Eng-land, for the day is here.

THE END

climate is hell: you cant stand it unless you drink till you see blue monkeys.

WILKS. Never mind him, Miss. he has nerves We all have them here sooner or later, off and on. Here! I'll give you a landing ticket, and you just clear off and say nothing [*He takes a ticket from the table and gives it to her*]

THE E O [*weeping*] A man's a slave here worse than a nigger Spied on, reported on, checked and told off til he's afraid to have a pound note in his pocket or take a glass in his hand for fear of being had up for bribery or drinking I'm fed up with it Go and report me and be damned to you: what do I care? [*He snuffs and blows his nose, relieved by his outburst.*]

WILKS. Would you have the kindness to clear out, Miss We're busy. You're passed all right. nothing to do but shew the ticket. You wont have to go back: we was only joking

THE Y W But I want to go back. If this place is what he says, it is no place for me And I did so enjoy the voyage out: I ask nothing better than to begin it all over again.

THE E O [*with the calm of despair*] Let her have her own way, Wilks Shew her the way to the ship and shew her the way to the dock gate She can take which she pleases But get her out of this or I shall commit suicide

THE Y W Why? Arnt you happy? It's not natural not to be happy I'd be ashamed not to be happy

THE E O. What is there to make a man happy here?

THE Y. W But you dont need to be made happy. You ought to be happy from the inside. Then you wouldnt need things to make you happy.

THE E O. My inside! Oh Lord!

THE Y W Well, you can make your inside all right if you eat properly and stop drinking and keep the office dusted and your nice white clothes clean and tidy. You two are a disgrace.

THE E O. [*roaring with rage*] Chuck that woman out

WILKS. Chuck her yourself What can I do? [*Imploringly to her*] If youd only have the goodness to go, Miss We're so busy this morning

THE Y W But I am a stranger here: I have nobody else to talk to And you have nothing to do until the next boat comes in.

THE E O The next boat is due the day after tomorrow at five in the afternoon Do you expect us to sit here talking to you until then?

THE Y. W Well, it's I who have to do most of the talking, isnt it? Couldnt you shew me round the town? I'll pay for the taxi

THE E O [*feebly rebellious*] Look here: you cant go on like this, you know.

THE Y. W What were you going to do with yourself this morning if I hadnt come?

THE E O I—I—Whats that to you?

THE Y W I see you hadnt made up your mind Let me make it up for you Put on your hat and come along and shew me round I seem to spend my life making up other people's minds for them.

THE E O [*helplessly*] All right, all right, all right. You neednt make a ballyhoo about it But I ask myself—

THE Y W Dont ask yourself anything, my child Let life come to you March

THE E O. [*at the railway door, to Wilks, in a last effort to assert himself*] Carry on, you [*He goes*]

THE Y. W. Wouldnt you like to come too?

WILKS. Yes, Miss, but somebody must stay in the office, and it had better be me than him. I am indispensable

THE Y W What a word! Dispensables and indispensables there you have the whole world. I wonder am I a dispensable or an indispensable. [*She goes out through the railway door.*]

WILKS [*alone*] Let life come to you. Sounds all right, that Let life come to you. Aye, but suppose life doesnt come to you! Look at me! What am I? An empire builder: thats what I am by nature Cecil Rhodes. thats me Why am I a clerk with only two shirts to my back, with that young waster wiping his dirty boots on me for doing the work he cant do himself, though he gets all the praise and all the pudding? Because life never came to me like it came to Rhodes Found his backyard full of diamonds, he did, and nothing to do but wash the clay off them and be a millionaire I had Rhodes's idea all right. Let the whole earth be England, I said to the school teacher, and let Englishmen govern it Nobody put that into my head it came of itself But what did I find in my backyard? Next door's dead cat. Could I make myself head of a Chartered Company with a dead cat? And when I threw it back over the wall my mother said "You have thrown away

your luck, my boy" she says "you shouldnt have thrown it back you should have passed it on, like a chain letter Now you will never have no more luck in this world " And no more I have I says to her "I'll be in the papers yet some day" I says "like Cecil Rhodes you see if I'm not " "Not you, my lad" she says "Everything what comes to you you throw it back." Well, so I do Look at this gurl here "Come with me" she says And I threw the cat back again "Somebody must be left in the office" I says "I am indispensable" I says And all the time I knew that nobody neednt be in the office, and that any Jew boy could do all I do here and do it better But I promised my mother I'd get into the papers, and I will. I have that much of the Rhodes touch in me [*He sits at the table and writes on a luggage label, then reads what he has written*] "Here hes a man who might have been Cecil Rhodes if he had had Rhodes's luck Mother, farewell. your son has kept his word." [*He ties the label to the lapel of his coat*] Wheres that fool's gun? [*He opens a drawer and takes out a brandy flask and an automatic pistol, which he throws on the table*] I'll damned well shew em whether I'm an empire builder or not. That lassie shant say that I didnt leave the place tidy either, though she can write in the dust of it with her finger [*He shuts the drawer, and places the chair trimly at the table Then he goes to his desk and takes out a duster, with which he wipes first the desk and then the table He replaces the duster in the desk, and takes out a comb and a hand mirror He tidies his hair, replaces the comb and glass in the desk, closes it and sets the stool in its place before it He then returns to the table, and empties the flask at a draught*] Now for it The back of the head thats the Russian touch [*He takes the pistol and presents it over his shoulder to his occiput*] Let the whole earth be England, and let Englishmen rule it. [*Singing*] Rule Britannia Britannia rules the sea—

He blows his brains out and falls dead The Station Master enters

THE STATION MASTER Here! Who's been shooting here? [*He sees the body*] Wilks!! Dear! dear! dear! What a climate! The fifth this month. [*He goes to the door*] Hallo there, Jo Bring along the stretcher and two or three with you Mr Wilks has shot himself.

JO [*without, cheerfully*] Right you are, sir

THE STATION MASTER What a climate! Poor old Wilks!

SCENE II

A grassy cliff top overhanging the sea A seat for promenaders The young woman and the emigration officer stand on the brink

THE Y W Pity theres no beach We could bathe

THE E O Not us Not likely Theres sharks there And killer whales, worse than any sharks

THE Y W It looks pretty deep

THE E O I should think it is The biggest liners can get close up Like Plymouth Like Lulworth Cove Dont stand so close Theres a sort of fascination in it, and you might get giddy

They come away from the edge and sit on the seat together she on his left, he nearest the sea

THE Y W It's lovely here Better than the town.

THE E O Dont deceive yourself It's a horrible place The climate is something terrible Do you know that if you hadnt come in this morning I'd have done myself in

THE Y W Dont talk nonsense Why should you do yourself in?

THE E O Yes I should. I had the gun ready in the drawer of that table I'd have shot Wilks and then shot myself

THE Y W Why should you shoot poor Wilks? What has he done?

THE E O I hate him He hates me Everybody here hates everybody else And the fellow is so confoundedly smug and happy and satisfied it drives me mad when I can hardly bear my own life No fear of him shooting himself not much So I thought I'd save him the trouble

THE Y W But that would be murder

THE E O Not if I shot myself after That would make us quits

THE Y W Well, I am surprised to hear a young man like you, in the prime of life as you might say, talking like that Why dont you get married?

THE E O My salary's too small for a white woman Theyre all snobs, and they want a husband only to take them home out of this

THE Y W Why, it's an earthly paradise

THE E O Tell them so, and see what they'll say to you

THE Y W. Well, why not marry a coloured woman?

THE E O You dont know what youre talking about Ive tried. But now theyre all educated they wont look at a white man. They tell me I'm ignorant and that I smell bad

THE Y W Well, so you do You smell of drink and indigestion and sweaty clothes. You were quite disgusting when you tried to make up to me in the taxi Thats why I got out, and made for the sea air.

THE E O. [*rising hurriedly*] I cant stand any more of this [*He takes a wallet of papers from his breast pocket and throws them on the seat*] Hand them in at the office, will you theyll be wanted there I am going over

He makes for the edge of the cliff But there is a path down the cliff face, invisible from the seat A native priest, a handsome man in the prime of life, beautifully dressed, rises into view by this path and bars his way

PRIEST. Pardon, son of empire This cliff contains the temple of the goddess who is beyond naming, the eternal mother, the seed and the sun, the resurrection and the life You must not die here I will send an acolyte to guide you to the cliff of death, which contains the temple of the goddess's brother, the weeder of the garden, the sacred scavenger, the last friend on earth, the pro-longer of sleep and the giver of rest It is not far off: life and death dwell close together you need prolong your unhappiness only a bare five minutes. The priest there will attend to your remains and see they are disposed of with all becoming rites.

THE E O [*to the young woman*] Is he real, or is it the drink?

THE Y W. He's real And, my word! isnt he jolly good looking? [*To the priest*] Youll excuse this young man, sir, wont you? He's been drinking pretty hard

THE PRIEST [*advancing between them*] Blame him not, sweet one He comes from a strange mad country where the young are taught languages that are dead and histories that are lies, but are never told how to eat and drink and clothe themselves and reproduce their species They worship strange ancient gods, and they play games with balls marvelously well; but of the great game of life they are ignorant Here, where they are in the midst of life and loveliness, they die by their own hands to escape what they call the horrors. We do not encourage them to live The empire is for those who can live in it, not for those who can only die in it. Take

your friend to the cliff of death, and bid him farewell tenderly, for he is very unhappy.

THE E O. Look here: I am an Englishman; and I shall commit suicide where I please No nigger alive shall dictate to me.

THE PRIEST. It is forbidden

THE E O. Who's to stop me? Will you?

The priest shakes his head and makes way for him

THE Y W Oh, you are not going to let him do it, are you?

THE PRIEST [*holding her back*] We never offer violence to the unhappy Do not interfere with his destiny

THE E O [*planting himself on the edge and facing the abyss*] I am going to do it see? Nobody shall say that I lived a dog's life because I was afraid to make an end of it [*He bends his knees to spring, but cannot*] I WILL [*He makes another effort, bending almost to his haunches, but again fails to make the spring-up a spring-over*]

THE PRIEST Poor fellow! Let me assist you [*He shoots his foot against the E. O's posterior and sends him over the cliff*]

THE E O [*in a tone of the strongest remonstrance as he is catapulted into the void*] Oh! [*A prodigious splash*].

THE Y W Murderer!

THE PRIEST Not quite There are nets below, and a palisade to keep out the sharks. The shock will do him good

THE Y W Well, I never!

THE PRIEST Come, young rose blossom, and feast with us in the temple.

THE Y W. Not so much rose blossom, young man. Are there any priestesses down there?

THE PRIEST Of course How can men feast without women?

THE Y W Well, let life come to you I always say; and dont cry out until youre hurt After you, sir.

They descend

SCENE III

A shelf of rock half way down the cliff forms an esplanade between the sea and a series of gigantic images of oriental deities in shallow alcoves cut in the face of the wall of rock A feast of fruit and bread and soft drinks is spread on the ground The young woman is sitting at it between the priest on her right nearest the sea and a very handsome young native priestess in robes of dusky yellow silk on her left nearest the images.

THE Y W You know, to me this is a funny sort of lunch You begin with the dessert We begin with the entrées I suppose it's all right, but I have eaten so much fruit and bread and stuff that I dont feel I want any meat

THE PRIEST We shall not offer you any We dont eat it

THE Y W Then how do you keep up your strength?

THE PRIEST It keeps itself up

THE Y W Oh, how could that be? [*To the priestess*] You wouldnt like a husband that didnt eat plenty of meat, would you? But then youre a priestess, so I suppose it doesnt matter to you, as you cant marry.

THE PRIESTESS I am married

THE Y W Oh! And you a priestess!

THE PRIESTESS I could not be a priestess if I were not married. How could I presume to teach others without a completed human experience? How could I deal with children if I were not a mother?

THE Y W But that isnt right My sister was a teacher, but when she married they took her job away from her and wouldnt let her teach any more.

THE PRIESTESS The rulers of your country must be mad.

THE Y W Oh no Theyre all right just like other people [*To the priest*] I say, reverend. What about the poor lad you kicked over the cliff? Is he really safe? I dont feel easy about him

THE PRIEST His clothes are drying in the sun They will lend him some clothes and send him up here as soon as he has recovered from his ducking

An English lady tourist, Baedeker in hand, has wandered in, trying to identify the images with the aid of her book She now comes behind the seated group and accosts the priest

THE L T Excuse me, but can you tell me which of these figures is the principal god?

THE PRIEST [*rising courteously*] The principal one? I do not understand

THE L T I get lost among all these different gods it is so difficult to know which is which.

THE PRIEST They are not different gods They are all god.

THE L T But how can that be? The figures are different

THE PRIEST God has many aspects

THE L T But all these names in the guide book?

THE PRIEST God has many names

THE L T Not with us, you know

THE PRIEST Yes even with you The Father, the Son, the Spirit, the Immaculate Mother—

THE L T Excuse me We are not Catholics

THE PRIESTESS [*sharply*] Are your temples then labelled "For men only"?

THE L T [*shocked*] Oh, really! So sorry to have troubled you [*She hurries away*]

THE PRIEST [*resuming his seat*] You should not be rude to the poor lady She is English, and doesnt understand

THE PRIESTESS I find these heathen idolaters very trying Is it really kind to treat them according to their folly instead of to our wisdom?

THE Y W Here! Steady on, you Who are you calling heathen idolaters? Look at all those images I should say, if you ask me, that the boot is on the other leg

THE PRIEST Those images are not idols they are personifications of the forces of nature by which we all live But of course to an idolater they are idols

THE Y W You talk a lot about religion here. Cant you think of something livelier? I always say let life come to you, and dont bother about religion.

THE PRIESTESS An excellent rule But the more you let life come to you, the more you will find yourself bothering about religion

The Emigration Officer rises into view in a spotless white robe He is clean and rather pale, but looks regenerated

THE Y W Oh boy, you do look the better for your dip Why, he's an angel, a lamb What have you done to him?

THE E O [*seating himself at the end of the table with his back to the sea*] Well, if you want to know, this blighter kicked me into the sea, and when I'd swallowed a ton or two of your best salt water they fished me out in a net and emptied me out I brought up my immortal soul They gave me what I thought was a nice cup of their tea to settle my stomach, but it made me ten times as sick as I was before Theres nothing of the man you met this morning left except his skin and bones You may regard me as to all intents and purposes born again

THE PRIEST Do you still wish to kill yourself?

THE E O When you have been through what I have been through since they fished

me out of the water you wont worry about trifles as I used to, old man

THE Y. W. Thats right. Let life come to you, I always say.

THE E O Yes, let life come. The premises are quite empty.

THE LADY TOURIST [*returning and addressing the priest*] Excuse me; but I have been thinking so much about you since you spoke to me. Would you mind accepting and reading this little tract?

THE PRIEST [*rising and coming forward to her, meanwhile reading the title with a polite show of interest*] "Where will you spend eternity?"

THE L T. [*strangely moved*] I have been haunted by your face. I could not bear to think of your spending eternity in torment I feel sure it is a Christian face.

THE PRIEST It is very kind of you. I will read the tract with the greatest attention Thank you.

The lady, having no excuse for staying, moves away reluctantly towards the images.

THE PRIESTESS [*calling after her imperiously*] Where have you spent eternity so far, may I ask? That which has no end can have no beginning?

THE L T Excuse me I have no desire to speak to you

THE Y. W. [*indicating the priest*] Fallen in love with him, have you? Well, let yourself rip Let life come to you.

THE L T. Oh! How dare you? Really! Really!! [*She goes out indignantly*]

THE PRIESTESS Another conquest, Pra?

THE Y W. Is his name Pra?

THE PRIESTESS He has many names, but he answers to Pra when you call him

THE Y W. Oh, what a way to put it! The man isnt a dog, is he?

THE PRIESTESS. He inspires a doglike devotion in women. He once did in me, so I know

THE PRIEST Dont be vindictive, Prola I dont do it on purpose [*He sits down again, this time next her on her left*].

THE PRIESTESS No you do it by instinct That, also, is rather doglike.

THE PRIEST No matter I shall soon get the poor lady beyond the doglike stage

THE E O [*who has been unable to take his eyes off the priestess*] Is your name Prola?

THE PRIEST She has many names some of them terrible ones, but she answers to Prola when you call her.

THE PRIESTESS. Young man: are my eyes like the fishpools of Heshbon?

THE E O Well, I have never seen the fishpools of Heshbon, but your eyes make me feel like that.

THE Y W. Seems to me theres some sort of magic about this old cave thats dangerous If you dont mind, I'll bid you all good morning I always say let life come to you; but here it's coming a bit too thick for me. [*She rises*]

THE PRIESTESS Wait We can share him

THE Y. W Well I never! [*She flops back into her seat, flabbergasted*].

THE PRIESTESS Hush Look.

The Lady Tourist returns and again goes to the priest.

THE L. T. Excuse me; but could I have a word with you alone?

THE PRIEST [*rising*] Certainly. Come with me

They go into the caves together

THE E O What about a word with me alone, Prola?

THE Y W. [*with redoubled emphasis*] Well I NEVER!!

THE PRIESTESS [*to the Officer*] You are not yet sufficiently regenerated. But you may hope.

THE Y W You take care, boy. I think youve got a touch of the sun. You cant be too careful in the tropics

An English male tourist enters from among the images He is on the young side of middle age, with pleasant aristocratic appearance and manners.

THE M T. Excuse me. I have mislaid my wife English lady with a guide book. Wears glasses Bi-focals.

THE Y W. Her husband! Oh, I say!

THE E O. [*rising deferentially*] Just left us, Sir Charles

THE M T Hallo! Weve met before, I think, havnt we?

THE E O When you landed, Sir Charles I am the emigration officer

SIR CHARLES Ah, of course yes. You know Lady Farwaters by sight Which way did she go?

THE E O. I am sorry I didnt notice

SIR CHARLES [*worried*] I wonder what she can be doing.

THE Y W. So do I

SIR CHARLES I beg your pardon?

THE Y W. Granted.

THE PRIESTESS [*rising and coming to him*]

May I shew you round the temple, Sir Charles? We shall probably find her there.

SIR CHARLES [*who has not yet hitherto looked particularly at her*] No thank you, no, no

THE PRIESTESS It is interesting I am not a professional guide I am a priestess, and I will see that you are not asked for anything You had better come with me

SIR CHARLES No I— [*he looks at her His tone changes instantly*] Well, yes, if you will be so good Certainly Thank you

They go into the alcoves together

THE Y W [*leaving the table*] Oh boy, what do you think of this abode of love? Lady Farwaters, as white as Canterbury veal, has fallen for a brown bishop, and her husband, the whitest English west-end white, has been carried off to her den by an amber colored snake charmer Lets get out of it while we're safe

THE E O I feel quite safe, thank you I have been cleaned up You havnt

THE Y W What do you mean, I havnt?

THE E O I mean that you were quite right to object to me half an hour ago Your offensive personal remarks were fully justified But now the tables are turned. I havnt gone through the fire, but Ive gone through the water And the water has gone through me It is for me now to object and to make personal remarks

THE Y W Make as much as one, and you will get your face smacked

THE E O [*seizing her by the wrist and the back of her collar*] Go and get cleaned up, you disgusting little devil. [*He rushes her to the edge*]

THE Y W [*screaming*] No

THE E O Yes [*He hurls her over*]

A scream cut short by a splash The E O sits down at the table and attacks the remains of the feast ravenously

THE PROLOGUE ENDS

ACT I

The lawn of a stately house on the north coast of a tropical island in the Pacific commands a fine view of the ocean and of a breakwater enclosing a harbor, large enough to accommodate a fleet, but at present shipless The western face of the house is reached by a terrace and a flight of steps The steps lead down to a crescent formed by two curved stone seats separated by a patch of sward surrounding a circular well with a low marble parapet This parapet, like the stone

seats, has silk cushions scattered about it

Behind the crescent the lawn is banked to a higher level and becomes a flower garden, sheltered from the wind by shrubberies To the west of the flower garden the lawn falls away to the sea, but not to sea level, all that is visible of the port being the top of the lighthouse There are trees enough in all directions to provide shade everywhere

However, the raised flower garden is the centre of interest, for in it are four shrines marking the corners of a square In the two foremost shrines two girl-goddesses sit crosslegged In the two further ones two youthful gods are sitting in the same fashion The ages of the four appear to be between 17 and 20 They are magically beautiful in their Indian dresses, softly brilliant, making the tropical flowers of the garden seem almost crude beside them Their expressions are intent, grave, and inscrutable They face south with their backs to the sea The goddess to the east has raven black hair, a swarthy skin, and robes of a thousand shades of deep carnation, in contrast to the younger one on her right, who is a ravishing blonde in a diaphanous white and gold sari There is a parallel contrast between the two youths, the one on the west being the younger and more delicate, and the one on his left older and more powerfully framed

The four figures give the garden a hieratic aspect which has its effect on a young English clergyman, who wanders into the grounds at the north west corner, looking curiously and apprehensively about him with the air of a stranger who is trespassing When he catches sight of the four figures he starts nervously and whips off his hat, then approaches them on tiptoe He has a baby complexion, and a childish expression, credulous and disarmingly propitiatory His age is at most 24

Down the steps at this moment comes Pra, about twenty years older than when we saw him last, but splendidly preserved His approach is dignified and even courteous, though not warmly so He evidently wants to know what the stranger is doing in his garden

THE CLERGYMAN [*nervously, hat in hand*] I beg your pardon I fear I am trespassing I am a stranger here, and I could not find a road up from the beach I thought I might cut across through your grounds [*Indicating the figures*] But I assure you I had no idea I was intruding on consecrated ground.

PRA You are not on consecrated ground, except in so far as all ground is consecrated

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh, excuse me. I thought—those idols—

PRA Idols!

THE CLERGYMAN No, of course not idols I meant those gods and goddesses—

PRA They are very beautiful, are they not? [*He speaks without awe or enthusiasm, with a touch of pity for the parson and weariness on his own part*]

THE CLERGYMAN. They are most beautiful Quite marvellous even to me, an English clergyman I can hardly wonder at your worshipping them, though of course you shouldnt.

PRA Beauty is worshipful, within limits. When you have worshipped your fill may I shew you the shortest way out? It is through the house. Where do you wish to go, by the way?

THE CLERGYMAN. I dont know I am lost

PRA Lost?

THE CLERGYMAN. Yes, quite lost I dont know where I am I mean I dont even know what country I am in.

PRA You are in the Unexpected Isles, a Crown Colony of the British Empire.

THE CLERGYMAN Do you mean the isles that came up out of the sea when I was a baby.

PRA Yes [*Pointing to the breakwater*] That is the harbor of the port of Good Adventure

THE CLERGYMAN. They put me on shore there.

PRA Who put you on shore?

THE CLERGYMAN. The pirates.

PRA Pirates!

THE CLERGYMAN. Yes I was their chaplain.

PRA You were their—! [*He turns to the house and calls*] Prola Prola.

PROLA'S VOICE Yes What is it?

PRA. Come out here

Prola comes down the steps. She, like Pra, is twenty years older, but the years have only made her beauty more impressive

THE CLERGYMAN [*gaping at her in undisguised awe and admiration*] Oh dear! Is this the lady of the house?

PROLA [*coming past Pra to the Clergyman*] Who is this gentleman?

PRA. He does not seem to know. I think he has escaped from the asylum

THE CLERGYMAN [*distressed*] Oh dear, beautiful lady, I am not mad. Everybody thinks I am Nobody believes what I say, though it is the simple truth I know it is very hard to believe.

PROLA. In the Unexpected Isles nothing is unbelievable. How did you get in here?

THE CLERGYMAN I lost my way trying to find a short cut up from the beach I climbed the fence. I am so sorry

PROLA Really sorry?

THE CLERGYMAN I did not mean to intrude. I apologize most sincerely

PROLA I did not ask you to apologize you are quite welcome I asked were you really sorry Do you regret finding yourself in this garden?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh no. It's like the Garden of Eden I should like to stay here forever [*Suddenly breaking down to the verge of tears*] I have nowhere to go

PROLA. Perhaps he is weak with hunger

THE CLERGYMAN No it's not that I have been under a great strain for a long time, and now that I have escaped—and the beauty of those four—and your lovely awfulness—and—oh [*collapsing on the stone seat*] I am making a fool of myself I always make a fool of myself Dont mind me.

PRA He thinks he has been chaplain in a pirate ship.

THE CLERGYMAN [*rising in desperate protest*] But I have. I have They kidnapped me at Weston Super Mare where I was doing locum tenens for the Rector of Saint Bidulphs It was on a Sunday afternoon. I had my clerical clothes on after taking the afternoon service "You look so innocent and respectable" they said "Just what we want!" They took me all over the world, where I couldnt speak the language and couldnt explain.

PRA And they wanted you to minister to them spiritually?

THE CLERGYMAN. No no. that was what was so dreadful They were crooks, racketeers, smugglers, pirates, anything that paid them. They used me to make people believe that they were respectable They were often so bored that they made me hold a service and preach, but it was only to make themselves ill laughing at me. Though perhaps I shouldnt say that Some of them were such dear nice fellows. they assured me it did them no end of good But they got tired of me and put me ashore here. [*He again resorts to the stone seat, clasping his temples distractedly*] Oh dear! oh dear! nothing ever happens to me that happens to other people And all because I was not a natural baby. I was a nitrogen baby.

PROLA. A nitrogen baby!

PRA [*to Prola*] Steady There may be something in this [*He goes to the clergyman and sits down beside him*] What do you mean by a nitrogen baby?

THE CLERGYMAN You see, my father is a famous biological chemist.

PROLA I do not see Your father may be a biological chemist, but biological chemists' children are like other people's children.

THE CLERGYMAN No No, I assure you Not my father's children You dont know my father Even my Christian name is Phosphor

PRA Is what?

THE CLERGYMAN Phosphor [*He spells it*] PHOSPHOR The name of the morning star Phosphorus, you know The stuff they make matches with. Such a name to baptize a boy by! Please dont call me by it.

PRA Come come! Neither your father nor your godfathers and godmothers could change your human nature by giving you an unusual name in baptism

THE CLERGYMAN But it wasnt only the name My father fed our cows on nitrogen grass

PRA Nitrogen gas, you mean

THE CLERGYMAN No nitrogen grass Some sort of grass that came up when he sprinkled our fields with chemicals The cows ate it, and their butter was very yellow and awfully rich So was the milk I was fed on that sort of milk and butter And the wheat in my bread was grown from special nitrates that my father made

PRA [*to Prola*] I believe he is not mad after all

THE CLERGYMAN I assure you I am not I am weakminded, but I am not mad.

PRA I have read some very interesting articles about this by an English chemist named Hammingtap

THE CLERGYMAN Thats my father My name is Hammingtap The old family name is Hummingtop, but my grandfather changed it when he was at Oxford.

PRA Prola our young friend here may really be a new sort of man. Shall we go in and tell the others about him? We might take him into the family for a while, as an experiment

THE CLERGYMAN [*alarmed*] Oh please, no Why does everyone want to make an experiment of me?

PROLA. All men and women are experi-

ments What is your religion?

THE CLERGYMAN The Christian religion, of course I am a clergyman

PROLA. What is the Christian religion?

THE CLERGYMAN Well, it is—well, I suppose it is the Christian religion I thought everybody knew. But then of course you are a heathen

PROLA What does the Christian religion mean to you?

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh, to me it means everything that is good and lovely and kind and holy I dont profess to go any further than that

PROLA You need not You had better not Wait here until we return We may find some use for you Come, Pra

She goes up the steps into the house, followed by Pra The Clergyman, left with the four figures, looks at them, looks round to make sure that nobody is watching Then he steals up to the fair goddess

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, how lovely you are! How I wish you were alive and I could kiss your living lips instead of the paint on a hard wooden image I wonder is it idolatry to adore you? St Peter in Rome is only a bronze image, but his feet have been worn away by the kisses of Christian pilgrims You make me feel as I have never felt before I must kiss you [*He does so and finds that she is alive She smiles as her eyes turn bewitchingly towards him*] Oh!!! [*He stands gasping, palpitating*]

THE ELDER YOUTH Beware

THE YOUNGER On guard

THE FAIR GIRL. Let him worship His lips are sweet and pure

THE DARK ONE "For he on honey dew hath fed"—

THE FAIR ONE —"and drunk the milk of paradise"

THE DARK ONE I, Vashti, can see his aura It is violet.

THE FAIR ONE I, Maya, can see his halo It is silvery

VASHTI Blessed are the shining ones!

MAYA. Blessed are the simple ones!

THE ELDER YOUTH Beware I, Janga, warn thee.

THE YOUNGER YOUTH On guard I, Kanchin, shew thee the red light

JANGA Their eyebrows are drawn bows

KANCHIN Their arrows feel sweet in the heart—

JANGA —but are deadly

KANCHIN The ground within reach of their arms is enchanted.

JANGA Vashti is lovely even to her brothers

KANCHIN Little children would die for Maya

JANGA. Beware.

KANCHIN On guard

JANGA Trust them not.

KANCHIN. They will break thy spear.

JANGA They will pierce thy shield.

VASHTI. Fear not, beginner: I will strengthen thee.

MAYA Strive not, beloved I will keep thy soul for thee.

THE 2 YOUTHS [*together, fortissimo*] Beware. *The two girl-goddesses suddenly and simultaneously spring from their shrines and march down upon him, Vashti to his left, Maya to his right*

VASHTI Dare you tread the plains of heaven with us, young pilgrim?

MAYA We are waves of life in a sea of bliss. Dare you breast them, young swimmer?

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh, I dont know whether you are gods and, goddesses or real people. I only know that you fill my heart with inexpressible longings.

MAYA. We are the awakening

VASHTI. We are the way.

MAYA. We are the life.

VASHTI I am the light. Look at me. [*She throws her arm round him and turns his face to hers*]

MAYA. I am the fire. Feel how it glows [*She also throws her arm round him*]

LADY FARWATERS comes from the house, and pauses at the top of the steps to take in what is going on

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh, one at a time, please

VASHTI. Perfect love casteth out choice.

MAYA In love there is neither division nor measure.

LADY FARWATERS [*rushing to him and dragging him away from them*] Stop it, children: you are driving the man mad. Go away, all of you.

The two youths spring from their pedestals and whirl the girls away through the shrubberies.

VASHTI [*invisible, calling*] I will return in dreams

MAYA [*similarly*] I leave my arrow in your heart

LADY FARWATERS You mustnt mind them
Prola and Pra come down the steps, followed by Sir Charles Farwaters and by Hugo Hyering

C.B. and Mrs Hyering Hyering is the former emigration officer, now an elderly and very different man, disciplined, responsible and well groomed. His wife is the emigrant girl twenty years older and better drilled socially, but still very much her old self. Lady Farwaters, once a gaunt and affected tourist visiting cave temples and distributing tracts to the heathen, is now a bland and attractive matron.

PRA. Mr Hammingtap let me introduce you to the Governor of the Unexpected Isles, Sir Charles Farwaters.

SIR CHARLES [*offering his hand*] How do you do, Mr Hammingtap?

THE CLERGYMAN [*jerkily nervous*] Very pleased [*They shake hands*].

Sir Charles sits down in the middle of the stone seat nearest the steps

PRA. Lady Farwaters

LADY FARWATERS [*smiles and proffers her hand*]!

THE CLERGYMAN. Most kind— er [*He shakes*]

Lady Farwaters sits down in the middle of the other stone seat

PRA. This is Mr Hugo Hyering, political secretary to the Isles.

THE CLERGYMAN How do you do, Sir Hugo?

HYERING [*shaking hands*] Not Sir Hugo [*Introducing*] Mrs Hyering

MRS HYERING [*shaking hands*] C B, in case you are addressing a letter [*She sits down on Sir Charles's left*].

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, I am so sorry

HYERING Not at all [*He sits on Lady Farwaters' right*]

PRA [*indicating the parapet of the well*] You had better sit here

THE CLERGYMAN [*sitting down as directed*] Thank you

Prola sits down on Sir Charles's left, and Pra on Lady Farnaters' left

LADY FARWATERS You have made the acquaintance of our four children, Mr Hammingtap?

THE CLERGYMAN I couldnt help it I mean—

PROLA We know what you mean You need not explain

THE CLERGYMAN But I assure you I—that is—

MRS HYERING Dont apologize, Mr Hammingtap. We know quite well what our daughters are capable of when they are attracted by a young stranger

THE CLERGYMAN I did not understand They

are so sunburnt, and their dresses are so eastern I thought they were orientals

SIR CHARLES They are half orientals. You see, the family is a mixed one This lady, whom you may address as Prola, and this gentleman, known as Pra, are both entirely oriental, and very dominant personalities at that, so that naturally our children would have a strong oriental strain, would they not?

THE CLERGYMAN [*hastily*] Oh, of course Quite Certainly [*He looks piteously at their gracious unconcerned faces, which tell him nothing*] I beg your pardon I am frightfully sorry, but my nerves are in rags, and I cannot follow what you are saying

HYERING Oh yes you can It's all right you have understood perfectly

MRS HYERING Buck up, Mr Hammingtap Let life come to you

LADY FARWATERS Our family arrangements are not those usual in England We are making a little domestic experiment—

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, not an experiment, I hope Chemical experiments are bad enough I am one myself, but they are scientific I don't think I could countenance a domestic experiment And in spite of what you say I am not sure that I am not going mad.

SIR CHARLES We are distracting you Let us change the subject Would you like to be a bishop?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh dear! Can you make me one?

SIR CHARLES Well, my recommendation would probably be decisive A bishop is needed here a bishop in partibus infidelium Providence seems to have thrown you on this shore for the purpose, like Jonah Will you undertake it?

THE CLERGYMAN I should like to have a bishop's salary, certainly But unfortunately I am weakminded.

SIR CHARLES Many bishops are, and they are the best sort A strongminded bishop is a horror

THE CLERGYMAN I am too young

SIR CHARLES You will not remain so Most bishops are too old

THE CLERGYMAN [*tempted*] It would be rather a lark, wouldn't it?

MRS HYERING That's right, Mr Hammingtap let life come to you

PRA What objection have you to be a bishop?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, none, I assure you Of

course no clergyman could object to be a bishop But why do you want to make me one?

SIR CHARLES I will be quite frank with you, Mr Hammingtap Twenty years ago my wife and I, with Mr and Mrs Hyering, joined this eastern gentleman and his colleague in a eugenic experiment Its object was to try out the result of a biological blend of the flesh and spirit of the west with the flesh and spirit of the east We formed a family of six parents

THE CLERGYMAN Six?

SIR CHARLES Yes, six The result has been a little disappointing from the point of view of numbers, but we have produced four children, two of each sex, and educated them in the most enlightened manner we were capable of They have now grown up, consequently the time has arrived when the family group must be extended by young persons of their own age, so that the group may produce a second generation Now sooner or later this extension of the family group will set people talking

THE CLERGYMAN It would strike my people dumb, if I grasp your meaning rightly

SIR CHARLES You do I mean exactly what I say There will be a struggle with public opinion in the empire We shall not shrink it it is part of our plan to open people's minds on the subject of eugenics and the need for mixing not only western and eastern culture but eastern and western blood Still, we do not want to be stopped, as the Mormons were, or as the Oneida Community would have been if it had not voluntarily broken up We want to set the intelligent people talking, and to strike the stupid people dumb And we think we could do both by adding a bishop to the family

MRS HYERING And that is where you come in, young man

PRA There is another consideration that weighs with us at least with me I am convinced that there is something lacking in the constitution of the children It may be a deficiency of nitrogen. It certainly is a deficiency of something that is essential to a complete social human being

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, I cannot believe that They seemed to me to be quite perfect I cannot imagine anyone more perfect than Maya

PRA Well, what did you think of Maya's

conscience, for example?

THE CLERGYMAN [*benighted*] Her conscience? I suppose—I don't know—I—

PRA Precisely You don't know Well, we do know. Our four wonderful children have all sorts of talents, all sorts of accomplishments, all sorts of charms And we are heartily tired of all their attractions because, though they have artistic consciences, and would die rather than do anything ugly or vulgar or common, they have not between the whole four of them a scrap of moral conscience They have been very carefully fed. all the vitamins that the biological chemists have discovered are provided in their diet All their glands are scientifically nourished Their physical health is perfect Unfortunately the biological chemists have not yet discovered either the gland that produces and regulates the moral conscience or the vitamins that nourish it. Have you a conscience, Mr Hammingtap?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh yes I wish I hadn't It tortures me You know, I should have enjoyed being a pirate's chaplain sometimes if it hadn't been for my terrible conscience. It has made my life one long remorse; for I have never had the strength of mind to act up to it

PRA That suggests very strongly that the conscientious man is, chemically speaking, the nitrogenic man Here, then, we have four young adults, insufficiently nitrogenized, and therefore deficient in conscience. Here also we have a young adult saturated with nitrogen from his cradle, and suffering from a morbid excess of conscience A union between him and our girls is clearly indicated

THE CLERGYMAN. You mean that I ought to marry one of them?

PRA. Not at all. They would regard that as an invidious proceeding

THE CLERGYMAN Invidious! I don't understand.

LADY FARWATERS [*goodnaturedly*] Let me try to break it to you, Mr Hammingtap. The two girls attract you very much, don't they?

THE CLERGYMAN. How can one help being attracted, Lady Farwaters? They're quite beautiful.

LADY FARWATERS Both of them?

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh, as a clergyman I could not be attracted by more than one at a time Still, somehow, I seem to love them all in an inexpressible sort of way Only, if there were

any question of marriage, I should have to choose

PROLA And which would you choose?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh, I should choose Maya.

PROLA. Maya would at once reject you

THE CLERGYMAN [*much dejected*] I suppose so I know I am no catch for Maya. Still, she was very kind to me In fact—but perhaps I oughtn't to tell you this—she kissed me

SIR CHARLES Indeed? That shews that she contemplates a union with you

LADY FARWATERS You must not think she would reject you on the ground of any personal unworthiness on your part

THE CLERGYMAN Then on what ground? Oh, I shouldn't have kissed her.

MRS HYERING Oho! You said it was she who kissed you.

THE CLERGYMAN Yes I know I should have explained that But she let me kiss her

MRS HYERING. That must have been a thrill, Mr Hammingtap Life came to you that time, didn't it?

THE CLERGYMAN Oh please, I can't speak of it. But why should she reject me if I make her an honorable proposal?

LADY FARWATERS Because she will consider your honorable proposal dishonorable, Mr Hammingtap, unless it includes all the ladies of the family You will not be allowed to pick and choose and make distinctions You marry all or none.

THE CLERGYMAN. Oh dear! My poor little brain is giving way I can't make sense of what you are saying I know that your meaning must be perfectly right and respectable, Lady Farwaters; but it sounds like a dreadful sort of wickedness

LADY FARWATERS. May I try to explain?

THE CLERGYMAN Please do, Lady Farwaters But I wish you wouldn't call me Mr Hammingtap. I am accustomed to be called Iddy among friends

MRS HYERING What does Iddy stand for?

THE CLERGYMAN Well, in our home I was known as the idiot

MRS HYERING Oh! I am sorry: I didn't know

THE CLERGYMAN Not at all My sister was the Kiddy, so I became the Iddy. Do please call me that And be kind to me I am weak-minded and lose my head very easily, and I can see that you are all wonderfully clever and strong-minded. That is why I could be so happy here I can take in anything if you will only tell it to me in a gentle hushabyebaby

sort of way and call me Iddy. Now go on, Lady Farwaters. Excuse me for interrupting you so long.

LADY FARWATERS You see, Iddy—

IDDY Oh, thanks!

LADY FARWATERS [*continuing*]—our four children are not like European children and not like Asiatic children. They have the east in their brains and the west in their blood. And at the same time they have the east in their blood and the west in their brains. Well, from the time when as tiny tots they could speak, they invented fairy stories. I thought it silly and dangerous, and wanted to stop them; but Prola would not let me. She taught them a game called the heavenly parliament in which all of them told tales and added them to the general stock until a fairyland was built up, with laws and religious rituals, and finally a great institution which they called the Superfamily. It began by my telling them in my old conventional English way to love one another, but they would not have that at all. They said it was vulgar nonsense and made them interfere with one another and hate one another. Then they hit out for themselves the idea that they were not to love one another, but that they were to be one another.

IDDY To be one another! I don't understand.

SIR CHARLES Neither do I. Pra and Prola think they understand it, but Lady Farwaters and I don't, and we don't pretend to. We are too English. But the practical side of it—the side that concerns you—is that Vashti and Maya are now grown up. They must have children. The boys will need a young wife.

IDDY You mean two wives.

LADY FARWATERS Oh, a dozen, if so many of the right sort can be found.

IDDY But—but—but that would be polygamy.

PROLA You are in the east, Mr Iddy. The east is polygamous. Try to remember that polygamists form an enormous majority of the subjects of the British Empire, and that you are not now in Clapham.

IDDY How dreadful! I never thought of that.

LADY FARWATERS And the girls will need a young husband.

IDDY [*imploringly*] Two young husbands, Lady Farwaters. Oh please, two.

LADY FARWATERS I think not, at first.

IDDY Oh! But I am not an oriental. I am a clergyman of the Church of England.

HYERING That means nothing to Vashti.

PRA And still less to Maya.

IDDY But—but—oh dear! don't you understand? I want to marry Maya. And if I marry Maya I cannot marry Vashti. An English clergyman could not marry two women.

LADY FARWATERS From their point of view they are not two women. They are one. Vashti is Maya; and Maya is Vashti.

IDDY But even if such a thing were possible how could I be faithful to Vashti without being unfaithful to Maya? I couldn't bear to be unfaithful to Maya.

LADY FARWATERS. Maya would regard the slightest unfaithfulness to Vashti as a betrayal of herself and a breach of your marriage vow.

IDDY But that's nonsense. Utter nonsense. Please don't put such things into my head. I am trying so hard to keep sane, but you are terrifying me. If only I could bring myself never to see Maya again I should rush out of this garden and make for home. But it would be like rushing out of heaven. I am most unhappy, and yet I am dreadfully happy. I think I am under some sort of enchantment.

MRS HYERING Well, stick to the enchantment while it lasts. Let life come to you.

PRA May I remind you that not only Vashti and Maya, but all the ladies here, are included in the superfamily compact.

IDDY Oh, how nice and comfortable that would be! They would be mothers to me.

PROLA [*rebuking Pra*] Let him alone, Pra. There is such a thing as calf love. Vashti and Maya are quite enough for him to begin with. Maya has already driven him half mad. There is no need for us old people to drive him quite out of his senses. [*She rises*] This has gone far enough. Wait here alone, Mr Hammingtap, to collect your thoughts. Look at the flowers, breathe the air, open your soul to the infinite space of the sky. Nature always helps.

IDDY [*rising*] Thank you, Lady Prola. Yes, that will be a great help.

PROLA Come [*She goes up the steps and into the house*].

They all rise and follow her, each bestowing a word of counsel or comfort on the distracted clergyman.

PRA Relax. Take a full breath and then relax. Do not strangle yourself with useless anxieties. [*He goes*].

LADY FARWATERS Cast out fear, Iddy Warm heart. Clear mind. Think of having a thousand friends, a thousand wives, a thousand mothers [*She pats him on the shoulder and goes*]

SIR CHARLES Stand up to it, my boy The world is changing. Stand up to it [*He goes*]

MRS HYERING Dont let that conscience of yours worry you. Let life come to you [*She goes*].

HYERING Try to sleep a little The morning has been too much for you [*He goes*]

IDDY Sleep! I will not sleep They want me to disgrace my cloth, but I wont. I wont relax I wont disobey my conscience I wont smell those flowers I wont look at the sky. Nature is not good for me here Nature is eastern here: it's poison to an Englishman. I will think of England and tighten myself up and pull myself together England! The Malverns! the Severn plain! the Welsh border! the three cathedrals! England that is me I that am England! Damn and blast all these tropical paradises I am an English clergyman, and my place is in England. Floreat Etona! Back to England and all that England means to an Englishman! In this sign I shall conquer [*He turns resolutely to go out as he came in, and finds himself face to face with Maya, who has stolen in and listened gravely and intently to his exhortation*]

IDDY [*collapsing in despair on the parapet of the well*] Oh Maya, let me go, let me go

MAYA [*sinking beside him with her arm round his neck*] Speak to me from your soul, and not with words that you have picked up in the street

IDDY. Respect my cloth, Miss Farwaters

MAYA. Maya Maya is my name I am the veil of the temple Rend me in twain.

IDDY I wont I will go home and marry some honest English girl named Polly Perkins [*Shuddering in her embrace*] Oh, Maya, darling speak to me like a human being.

MAYA That is how I speak to you; but you do not recognize human speech when you hear it you crave for slang and small talk, and for ready-made phrases that mean nothing. Speak from your soul, and tell me do you love Vashti? Would you die for Vashti?

IDDY No

MAYA [*with a flash of rage, springing up*] Wretch! [*Calmly and conclusively*] You are free Farewell [*She points his way through the house*].

IDDY [*clutching at her robe*] No, no Do not leave me I love you—you I would die for you That sounds like a word picked up in the street, but it is true. I would die for you ten times over.

MAYA. It is not true Words, words, words out of the gutter. Vashti and Maya are one. you cannot love me if you do not love Vashti you cannot die for me without dying for Vashti

IDDY. Oh, I assure you I can.

MAYA Lies, lies If you can feel one heart throb for me that is not a throb for Vashti if for even an instant there are two women in your thoughts instead of one, then you do not know what love can be

IDDY But it's just the contrary I—

VASHTI [*who has entered silently, sits beside him and throws an arm round his shoulders*] Do you not love me? Would you not die for me?

IDDY [*mesmerized by her eyes*] Oh DEAR!!! Yes your eyes make my heart melt your voice opens heaven to me I love you. I would die a thousand times for you

VASHTI And Maya? You love Maya You would die a million times for Maya?

IDDY. Yes, yes. I would die for either, for both. for one, for the other—

MAYA For Vashti Maya?

IDDY For Vashti Maya, for Maya Vashti

VASHTI Your lives and ours are one life

MAYA [*sitting down beside him*] And this is the Kingdom of love.

The three embrace with interlaced arms and vanish in black darkness.

ACT II

A fine forenoon some years later The garden is unchanged; but inside the distant breakwater the harbor is crowded with cruisers, and on the lawn near the steps is a writing table littered with papers and furnished with a wireless telephone Sir Charles is sitting at the end of it with his back to the house. Seated near him is Pra Both are busy writing Hyering enters

SIR CHARLES Morning, Hyering

HYERING Morning [*He sits at the other end of the table after waving an acknowledgment of Pra's indication of a salaam*]. Anything fresh?

SIR CHARLES [*pointing to the roadstead*] Look! Five more cruisers in last night The papers say it is the first time the fleets of the British Empire have ever assembled in one place

HYERING. I hope it will never happen again.

If we dont get rid of them quickly there will be the biggest naval battle on record They are quarrelling already like Kilkenny cats

SIR CHARLES What about?

HYERING Oh, about everything About moorings, about firing salutes which has the right to fire first? about flags, about shore parties, about nothing We shall never be able to keep the peace between them The Quebec has got alongside the Belfast The Quebec has announced Mass at eleven on All Saints Day, and the Belfast has announced firing practice at the same hour Do you see that sloop that came in last night?

SIR CHARLES What is it?

HYERING The Pitcairn Island fleet They are Seventh Day Adventists, and are quite sure the Judgment Day is fixed for five o'clock this afternoon They propose to do nothing until then but sing hymns The Irish Free State admiral threatens to sink them if they dont stop How am I to keep them quiet?

PRA Dont keep them quiet Their squabbles will make them forget what they were sent here for

HYERING Forget! not they I have six ultimatums from their admirals, all expiring at noon today Look. *[He takes a batch of letters from his pocket and throws them on the table]*

SIR CHARLES *[pointing to the letters on the table]* Look at these!

PRA All about Iddy

SIR CHARLES Iddy has got into the headlines at home The cables are humming with Iddy Iddy has convulsed the Empire, confounded him!

HYERING Anything fresh from London or Delhi?

SIR CHARLES The same old songs The Church of England wont tolerate polygamy on any terms, and insists on our prosecuting Iddy if we cannot whitewash him Delhi declares that any attempt to persecute polygamy would be an insult to the religions of India

PRA The Cultural Minister at Delhi adds a postscript to say that as he has been married so hundred and thirtyfour times, and could not have lived on his salary without the bawdies, the protest of the Church of England shows a great want of consideration for his position He has a hundred and seventeen

children surviving

SIR CHARLES Then there's a chap I never heard of, calling himself the Caliph of British Islam He demands that Iddy shall put away all his wives except four

HYERING What does the Foreign Office say to that?

PRA The Foreign Office hails it as a happy solution of a difficulty that threatened to be very serious

HYERING What do you think about it all yourself, Pra?

PRA 'Think' Thought has no place in such discussions Each of them must learn that its ideas are not everybody's ideas Here is a cablegram from the League of British Imperial Womanhood, Vancouver and Pretoria. "Burn him alive and his hussies with him" Do you expect me to think about such people?

HYERING Nobody has made any practical suggestion, I suppose?

PRA The United States intervene with a friendly suggestion that the parties should be divorced But the Irish Free State will not hear of divorce, and points out that if the parties become Catholics their marriages can be annulled with the greatest ease

HYERING Oh, the west! the west! the west!

PRA Oh, the east! the east! the east! I tried to reconcile them, and I had only two successes you and Lady Farwaters

HYERING You kicked me into the sea

SIR CHARLES You made love to Lady Farwaters

PRA I had to use that method with very crude novices, and Lady Farwaters, with her English ladylike bringing-up, was so crude that she really could not understand any purely intellectual appeal Your own mind, thanks to your public school and university, was in an even worse condition, and Prola had to convert you by the same elementary method Well, it has worked, up to a point The insight you obtained into eastern modes of thought has enabled you to govern the eastern crown colonies with extraordinary success Downing Street hated you, but Delhi supported you, and since India won Dominion status Delhi has been the centre of the British Empire You, Hyering, have had the same diplomatic success in the east for the same reason But beyond this we have been unable to advance a step Our dream of founding a millennial world culture the

dream which united Prola and Pra as you first knew them, and then united us all six, has ended in a single household with four children, wonderful and beautiful, but sterile. When we had to find a husband for the blossoming girls, only one man was found capable of merging himself in the unity of the family—a man fed on air from his childhood. And how has this paragon turned out? An impotent simpleton. It would be impossible to conceive a human being of less consequence in the world. And yet, look! There is the Imperial Armada, in which every petty province insists on its separate fleet, every trumpery islet its battleship, its cruiser, or at least its sloop or gunboat! Why are they here, armed to the teeth, threatening what they call their sanctions? a word that once meant the approval of the gods, and now means bombs full of poison gas. Solely on account of the simpleton. To reform his morals, half of them want to rain destruction on this little household of ours, and the other half is determined to sink them if they attempt it.

HYERING. They darent use their bombs, you know.

PRA. True; but what is to prevent them from taking to their fists and coming ashore to fight it out on the beach with sticks and bottles and stones, or with their fists? What do the ultimatums say, Hyering?

HYERING [*reading them*] Number one from the English admiral. "If the polygamist-adulterer Hammingtap is not handed over by noon tomorrow" that is today "I shall be obliged to open fire on Government House." Number two, from the commander of the Bombay Squadron. "Unless an unequivocal guarantee of the safety and liberty of Mr Hammingtap be in my hands by noon today" that came this morning "I shall land a shore party equipped with machine guns and tear gas bombs to assist the local police in the protection of his person." Number three. "I have repeatedly informed you that the imperial province of Holy Island demands the immediate and exemplary combustion of the abominable libertine and damnable apostate known as Phosfor Hammingtap. The patience of the Holy Island fleet will be exhausted at noon on the 13th" today "and the capital of the Unexpected Islands must take the consequences." Number four—

SIR CHARLES Oh, bother number four!

They are all the same: not one of them has originality enough to fix half-past-eleven or a quarter-to-one.

HYERING By the way, Pra, have you taken any steps? I havnt

PRA. Yes I have. Dont worry. I have sent a message.

SIR CHARLES What message?

PRA. The Mayor of the Port earnestly begs the commanders of the imperial fleet to suspend action for another day, as his attention is urgently occupied by a serious outbreak of smallpox in the harbor district.

SIR CHARLES Good. [*The boom of a cannon interrupts him*] There goes the noonday cannon!

HYERING. I hope they got the message in time.

The garden and its occupants vanish. When they reappear, the harbor is empty. not a ship is visible. The writing table, with its chairs and papers, has been removed and replaced by a small tea-table. Tea is ready. The wireless telephone is still there.

Vashti and Maya are in their shrines. Lady Farwaters is sitting on the western stone seat, with Mrs Hyering beside her on her right. Prola is sitting on the eastern seat. All five ladies are taking tea.

Pra comes from the house with Sir Charles and Hyering. They help themselves to tea. Pra abstains.

SIR CHARLES Not a blessed ship left in the harbor! Your message certainly did the trick, Pra. [*He sits down beside Prola, on her left*]

PRA [*sitting down between the two British ladies*] They may come back.

HYERING [*sitting beside Prola, on her right*] Not a bit of it. By the time the fleet realizes that it has been humbugged the Empire will be tired of Iddy.

VASHTI. The world is tired of Iddy.

MAYA I am tired of Iddy.

VASHTI Iddy is a pestilence.

MAYA Iddy is a bore.

VASHTI. Let us throw ourselves into the sea to escape from Iddy.

MAYA Let us throw Iddy into the sea that he may escape from himself.

VASHTI You are wise, Prola. Tell us how to get rid of Iddy.

MAYA We cannot endure Iddy for ever, Prola.

PROLA. You two chose him, not I.

MAYA. We were young we did not know.

VASHTI Help us, Pra You have lost faith in us, but your wits are still keen

MAYA Pra we beseech thee Abolish the incubus

VASHTI Give him peace that we may have rest

MAYA Give him rest that we may have peace

VASHTI Let him be as he was before we knew him.

MAYA When we were happy

VASHTI When he was innocent

PRA You raised this strange spirit. I cannot exorcise him

VASHTI Rather than endure him I will empty the heavens of their rain and dew

MAYA Silence him, O ye stars

Iddy comes from the house in a condition of lazy self-complacence He is received in dead silence Nobody looks at him He pours himself out a cup of tea The silence becomes grim. He sits down on the grass at Prola's feet, and sips his tea. The silence continues

IDDY [at last] I am a futile creature

They all turn as if stung and look at him. Then they resume their attitudes of deadly endurance.

IDDY It is a terrible thing to be loved. I don't suppose any man has ever been loved as I have been loved, or loved as I have loved But there's not so much in it as people say I am writing a sermon about it It is a sermon on Eternity

They look at him as before

IDDY The line I am going to take is this We have never been able to imagine eternity properly St John of Patmos started the notion of playing harps and singing praises for ever and ever But the organist tells me that composers have to use the harp very sparingly because, though it makes a very pretty effect at first, you get tired of it so soon. You couldn't go on playing the harp for ever, and if you sang "Worthy is the Lamb" for ever you would drive the Lamb mad. The notion is that you can't have too much of a good thing, but you can you can bear hard-much longer than you could bear heaven.

e is like music Music is very nice the anist says that when the wickedness of nkund tempts him to despair he comforts nself by remembering that the human race oduced Mozart, but a woman who plays ie piano all day is a curse A woman who akes love to you all day is much worse, and

yet nothing is lovelier than love, up to a point. We all love one another here in a wonderful way: I love Vashti, I love Maya, I love Prola, and they all love me so wonderfully that their three loves are only one love But it is my belief that some day we'll have to try something else If we don't we'll come to hate one another

VASHTI If it is any consolation to you, Iddy, I can assure you that I already hate you so intensely that if it were in my nature to kill anything I should kill you

IDDY There now! I ought to be wounded and horrified, but I'm not I feel as if you'd given me a strawberry ice Thank you, dear Vashti, thank you You give me hope that even Maya will get tired of me someday

MAYA I have been on the point of beating you to a jelly for ever so long past, but just as my fists were clenched to do it you always managed to come out with some stroke of idiocy that was either so funny or so piteous that I have kissed you instead

IDDY You make me happier than I have been for months But, you know, that does not settle my difficulties I don't know whether other people are like me or not—

LADY FARWATERS No, Iddy you are unique.

IDDY Anyhow, I have made a discovery as regards myself

VASHTI. Enough is known already.

MAYA Seek no further there is nothing there

VASHTI There never has been anything

IDDY Shut up, you two This is something really interesting I am writing a second sermon

ALL THE REST [gasp] ! ! ! ! ! ! !

PRA. Was eternity not long enough for one sermon?

IDDY This one is on love

VASHTI [springing up] I will cast myself down from a precipice

MAYA [springing up] I will gas myself

IDDY. Oh, not until you have heard my sermon, please

PROLA. Listen to him, children. Respect the wisdom of the fool

VASHTI [resuming her goddess-in-a-shrine attitude] The oracles of the wise are unheeded Silence for the King of Idiots

MAYA [also enshrining herself] Speak, Solomon

IDDY Well, the discovery I have made is that we were commanded to love our enemies

because loving is good for us and dreadfully bad for them I love you all here intensely; and I enjoy loving you I love Vashti; I love Maya, and I adore Prola with a passion that grows and deepens from year to year

PROLA. Dolt! I am too old

IDDY You were never young and you will never be old You are the way and the light for me But you have never loved me and never will love me. You have never loved anything human why should you? Nothing human is good enough to be loved But every decent human creature has some capacity for loving Look at me! What a little worm I am! My sermons are wretched stuff, except these last two, which I think really have something in them I cannot bear being loved, because I know that I am a worm, and that nobody could love me unless they were completely deluded as to my merits But I can love, and delight in loving I love Vashti for hating me, because she is quite right to hate me her hatred is a proof of her beautiful clear judgment I love Maya for being out of all patience with me, because I know that I am enough to drive anybody mad, and she is wise enough to know how worthless I am I love Prola because she is far above loving or hating me; and there is something about her dark beauty that—

PROLA [*kicking him*] Silence, simpleton Let the unspeakable remain unspoken

IDDY I don't mind your kicking me, Prola you understand, and that is enough for me And now you see what a jolly fine sermon it will be, and why I shall be so happy here with you from this day on For I have the joy of loving you all without the burden of being loved in return, or the falsehood of being idolized

MAYA. Solomon has spoken.

VASHTI Stupendous

LADY FARWATERS. Do not mock, darlings There is something in what he says.

MAYA [*desperately*] But how are we to get rid of him? He is settling down with us for life

VASHTI We have brought him on ourselves.

MAYA We cannot make him hate us

VASHTI He will go with us to heaven

MAYA In the depths of hell he will find us

Kanchin and Janga enter processionally, reading newspapers

KANCHIN News!

JANGA News!

They sit enshrined, foursquare with their sisters

KANCHIN. By wireless

JANGA Tomorrow's three o'clock edition.

KANCHIN. The land that brought forth Iddy begins the Apocalypse

HYERING What do you mean? Has anything happened in England?

KANCHIN England has broken loose

SIR CHARLES. What do you mean? broken loose Read the news, man Out with it

KANCHIN [*reading the headlines*] Dissolution of the British Empire

JANGA [*reading*] Withdrawal of England from the Empire

KANCHIN England strikes for independence

JANGA Downing Street declares for a right little tight little island.

KANCHIN The British Prime Minister cuts the cable and gives the new slogan.

JANGA Back to Elizabeth's England, and to hell with the empire!

KANCHIN. Ireland to the rescue!

JANGA Free State President declares Ireland cannot permit England to break the unity of the empire Ireland will lead the attack on treason and disruption.

KANCHIN The Prime Minister's reply to the President suppressed as unprintable.

JANGA. Canada claims position of premier Dominion left vacant by the secession of England.

KANCHIN. Australia counterclaims as metropolitan dominion

JANGA New Zealand proclaims a butter blockade until its claim to precedence is recognized by Australia.

KANCHIN South Africa renames Capetown Empire City, and gives notice to all Britishers to clear out of Africa within ten days.

JANGA His Holiness the Pope calls on all Christendom to celebrate the passing away of the last vain dream of earthly empire, and the unity of all living souls in the Catholic Kingdom of God and his Church.

LADY FARWATERS That sounds like the voice of a grown-up man through the whooping of a pack of schoolboys.

JANGA [*prosaically*] So far, there have been no disturbances and little popular interest

KANCHIN. The various international Boards are carrying on as usual.

JANGA. Today's football—

PROLA. No, Janga; certainly not

SIR CHARLES But what becomes of our jobs

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

as Governor and political secretary, Hyering?
Will this affect our salaries?

HYERING They will stop that is all We
had better proclaim the Unexpected Isles an
independent republic and secure the new
jobs for ourselves

VASHTI The world is tired of republics and
their jobberies Proclaim a kingdom

MAYA Or a queendom

IDDY Oh yes let us make Prola queen And
I shall be her chaplain

PRA By all means, as far as I am con-
cerned Prola has always been the real ruler
here

VASHTI Prola is she who decides

MAYA Prola is she who unites

VASHTI Prola is she who knows

MAYA No one can withstand Prola

PROLA Be quiet, you two You shall not
make an idol of me

KANCHIN We shall make you Empress of
the Isles

JANGA Prola the First

VASHTI Homage, Prola

MAYA Love, Prola

KANCHIN Obedience, Prola

JANGA Absolute rule, Prola

PROLA All your burdens on me Lazy idle
children

KANCHIN Hurrah! All burdens on Prola

JANGA The burden of thought

VASHTI The burden of knowledge

MAYA The burden of righteousness.

VASHTI The burden of justice

MAYA The burden of mercy

PROLA Cease, cease these are not burdens
to me they are the air I breathe I shall rule
you as I have always done because you are
too lazy to rule yourselves

HYERING You can rule us, Prola But will
the public ever understand you?

PRA They will obey her They would not
do that if they understood

IDDY I have just been thinking—

MAYA Solomon has been thinking

VASHTI Thoughts without brains

IDDY Will the Antiphonal Quartet, if it
wants to give another concert, kindly re-
move itself out of hearing

KANCHIN Silence for the Prophet

JANGA Mum!

VASHTI Dumb

MAYA Tiddy iddy um Carry on, darling

IDDY Prola can rule this house because she
knows what is happening in it. But how is she

to be an Empress if she doesn't know what is
happening everywhere?

MRS HYERING She can read the newspapers,
can't she, silly?

IDDY Yes, but fifteen years later, when the
statesmen write their memoirs and auto-
biographies and publish them, we shall find
that it never happened at all and what really
happened was quite different We don't know
the truth about any of our statesmen until
they are dead and can't take libel actions
Nobody knows the sort of people we really
are The papers have been full of us for weeks
past, and not a single word they say about us
is true They think I am a sort of Mahdi or
Mad Mullah, and that Prola and Vashti and
Maya are a troop of immoral dancing girls,
and that Sir Charles is a voluptuous sultan
and Hyering a co-respondent. They don't live
in a world of truth they live in a world of
their own ideas, which have nothing to do
with our ideas Consequently—Therefore—
er—er— What was I going to say, Pra? My
brain is not strong enough to keep the thread
of my remarks I ought to have written it
down

PRA What you have arrived at is that we
cannot live in a world of political facts,
because we shall not know the political facts
for years to come We must therefore live in
a world of original ideas, created by ourselves
out of our own nature

IDDY Yes We mustn't pretend to be
omniscient Even God would not be omni-
scient if He read the newspapers We must
have an ideal of a beautiful and good world
We must believe that to establish that beau-
tiful and good world on earth is the best
thing we can do, and the only sort of
religion and politics that is worth bothering
about

PROLA What about the people who have no
original ideas, Iddy?

PRA The great majority of mankind?

IDDY They'll be only too glad to do what
you tell them, Prola, if you can make them
feel that it's right

PROLA And if they are incapable of feel-
ing it?

JANGA Kill

KANCHIN Kill

VASHTI Kill

MAYA Kill

PROLA They can do that as easily as I Any
fool can. And there are more of them

JANGA. Set them to kill one another, and die

KANCHIN. Divide and govern

VASHTI. Feed them on splendid words.

MAYA. Dazzle them with our beauty.

MRS HYERING. Well I never!

IDDY [*rising*] Excuse me I'm going into the ouse to get the field glass. [*He goes up the 'eps*]

MRS HYERING. Whatever do you want the eld glass for?

IDDY [*pointing to the sky*] There's a strange ird flying about there I think it's an albatross. [*He goes into the house*].

VASHTI, MAYA, KANCHIN, JANGA [*hissing after im*] Liar Baby. Dastard Hypocrite

SIR CHARLES [*laughing*] An albatross! Now ould anybody in the world, over the age of ix, except Iddy, invent such a ridiculous xcuse for going to his room to indulge in his oor little secret vice of cigaret smoking?

MAYA. Faugh! The unkillable.

VASHTI. The air poisoner

KANCHIN. The albatrocidity

MAYA, VASHTI, JANGA [*shocked by the pun*] Oh!!

LADY FARWATERS. Can't you four darlings lo something useful instead of sitting there leafening us with your slogans?

KANCHIN [*spruiging erect*] Yes, action 'ction!

JANGA [*rising similarly*] No more of this end-ess talk! talk! talk!

VASHTI. Yes, action! daring! Let us rob

MAYA. Let us shoot.

KANCHIN. Let us die for something

JANGA. For our flag and for our Empress.

VASHTI. For our country, right or wrong

MAYA. Let there be sex appeal. Let the women make the men brave

KANCHIN. We must defend our homes.

JANGA. Our women

VASHTI. Our native soil

MAYA. It is sweet to die for one's country.

VASHTI. It is glorious to outface death.

ALL FOUR. Yes. Death! death! Glory! glory!

PROLA. Hold your tongues, you young whelps. Is this what we have brought you up for?

PRA. Stop screaming about nothing, will you. Use your minds

MAYA. We have no minds

VASHTI. We have imaginations

KANCHIN. We have made this house a temple

JANGA. We have made Prola its goddess

MAYA. We have made it a palace

VASHTI. A palace for Queen Prola.

KANCHIN. She shall reign

JANGA. For ever and ever.

VASHTI AND MAYA [*in unison*] Hail, Prola, our goddess!

KANCHIN AND JANGA [*in unison*] Hail, Prola, our empress!

ALL FOUR [*rushing down to the lawn and throwing themselves on their knees before her*] Hail!

PROLA. Will you provoke me to box your ears, you abominable idolaters? Get up this instant. Go and scrub the floors. Do anything that is dirty and grubby and smelly enough to shew that you live in a real world and not in a fool's paradise. If I catch you grovelling to me, a creature of the same clay as yourselves, but fortunately for you with a little more common sense, I will beat the slavishness out of your bones

MAYA. Oh, what ecstasy to be beaten by Prola!

VASHTI. To feel her rule in the last extremity of pain!

KANCHIN. To suffer for her!

JANGA. To die for her!

PROLA. Get out, all four. My empire is not of such as you. Begone

MAYA. How lovely is obedience! [*She makes an obeisance and runs away through the garden*]

VASHTI. Obedience is freedom from the intolerable fatigue of thought [*She makes her obeisance and sails away, disappearing between the garden and the house*]

KANCHIN. You speak as an empress should speak. [*He salaams and bounds off after Maya*]

JANGA. The voice of authority gives us strength and unity. Command us always thus. It is what we need and love [*He strides away in Vashti's footsteps*]

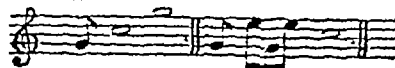
PROLA. An excuse for leaving everything to me. Lazy, lazy, lazy! Someday Heaven will get tired of lazy people; and the Pitcairn Islanders will see their Day of Judgment at last.

A distant fusillade of shotguns answers her
SIR CHARLES. Shooting! What can the matter be?

They all rise and listen anxiously

A trumpet call rings out from the sky.

ad lib.



HYERING Where on earth did that come from? There is not such a thing as a trumpet in the island.

The four come rushing back into the garden, wildly excited

KANCHIN Look, look, quick! The albatross
PRA [*rising*] The albatross!!

MAYA Yes Iddy's albatross Look!

JANGA Flying all over the town

VASHTI [*pointing*] There it goes See

A second fusillade of shotguns, much nearer

MAYA Oh, they're all trying to shoot it
Brutes!

KANCHIN They haven't hit it Here it comes

MAYA It's flying this way

VASHTI It's swooping down

Iddy comes from the house and trots down the steps with a field glass in his hand

IDDY I've been looking at it through the window for the last five minutes It isn't an albatross Look at it through this [*He hands the glass to Pra*]

KANCHIN Then what is it?

IDDY I think it's an angel

JANGA Oh get out, you silly idiot

PRA [*looking through the glass*] That is no bird

An angel flies down into the middle of the garden General stupefaction He shakes himself Quantities of bullets and small shot fall from his wings and clothes

THE ANGEL Really, your people ought to know better than to shoot at an angel

MAYA Are you an angel?

THE ANGEL Well, what do you suppose I am?

VASHTI Of course he is an angel. Look at his wings

THE ANGEL Attention, please! Have you not heard the trumpet? This is the Judgment Day

ALL THE REST The what?!!!!

THE ANGEL The Judgment Day The Day of Judgment

SIR CHARLES Well I'll be damned!

THE ANGEL Very possibly

HYERING Do you mean that the Pitcairn Islanders were right after all?

THE ANGEL Yes You are all now under judgment, in common with the rest of the English speaking peoples. Don't gape at me as if you had never seen an angel before

PROLA But we never have

THE ANGEL [*relaxing*] True Ha ha ha! Well, you thoroughly understand, don't you, that

your records are now being looked into with a view to deciding whether you are worth your salt or not

PRA And suppose it is decided that we are not worth our salt?

THE ANGEL [*reassuring them in a pleasantly offhanded manner*] Then you will simply disappear that is all You will no longer exist Don't let me keep you all standing Sit down if you like Never mind me sitting and standing are all alike to an angel However—[*he sits down on the parapet of the well*]

They sit as before, the four superchildren enshrining themselves as usual

The telephone rings Hyering rises and takes it

HYERING [*to the angel*] Excuse me [*To the telephone*] Yes? Hyering speaking Somebody what? Oh! somebody fooling on the wireless Well, they're not fooling an angel has just landed here to tell us the same thing An angel A for arrowroot, N for nitrogen, G for—that's it an angel Well, after all, the Judgment Day had to come some day, hadn't it? Why not this day as well as another? I'll ask the angel about it and ring you later Goodbye [*He rings off*] Look here, angel The wireless has been on all over Europe London reports the Judgment Day in full swing, but Paris knows nothing about it, Hilversum knows nothing about it, Berlin, Rome, Madrid, and Geneva know nothing about it, and Moscow says the British bourgeoisie has been driven mad by its superstitions How do you account for that? If it is the Judgment Day in England it must be the Judgment Day everywhere

THE ANGEL Why?

HYERING [*sitting down*] Well, it stands to reason

THE ANGEL Does it? Would it be reasonable to try cases in hundreds of different lands and languages and creeds and colors on the same day in the same place? Of course not The whole business will last longer than what you call a year We gave the English speaking folk the first turn in compliment to one of your big guns—a dean—name of Inge, I think I announced it to him last night in a dream, and asked him whether the English would appreciate the compliment. He said he thought they would prefer to put it off as long as possible, but that they needed it badly and he was ready The other languages will follow The United States of

America will be tried tomorrow, Australasia next day, Scotland next, then Ireland—

LADY FARWATERS. But excuse me they do not speak different languages.

THE ANGEL They sound different to us.

SIR CHARLES I wonder how they are taking it in England.

THE ANGEL I am afraid most of them are incapable of understanding the ways of heaven. They go motoring or golfing on Sundays instead of going to church; and they never open a Bible When you mention Adam and Eve, or Cain and Abel, to say nothing of the Day of Judgment, they don't know what you are talking about The others—the pious ones—think we have come to dig up all the skeletons and put them through one of their shocking criminal trials They actually expect us to make angels of them for ever and ever

MRS HYERING See here, angel This isn't a proper sort of Judgment Day. It's a fine day It's like Bank Holiday.

THE ANGEL. And pray why should the Day of Judgment not be a fine day?

MRS HYERING. Well, it's hardly what we were led to expect, you know.

JANGA "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise."

KANCHIN. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat"

JANGA "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up"

VASHTI. The stars are fixed in their courses They have not fallen to the earth.

MAYA The heavens are silent Where are the seven thunders?

VASHTI The seven vials full of the wrath of God?

JANGA. The four horses?

KANCHIN The two witnesses?

THE ANGEL My good people, if you want these things you must provide them for yourselves If you want a great noise, you have your cannons If you want a fervent heat to burn up the earth you have your high explosives If you want vials of wrath to rain down on you, they are ready in your arsenals, full of poison gases. Some years ago you had them all in full play, burning up the earth and spreading death, famine, and pestilence But the spring came and created life faster than you could destroy it The birds sang over your trenches; and their promise of summer was fulfilled The sun that shone undisturbed on your pitiful Day of Wrath shines

today over Heaven's Day of Judgment It will continue to light us and warm us; and there will be no noise nor wrath nor fire nor thunder nor destruction nor plagues nor terrors of any sort. I am afraid you will find it very dull

LADY FARWATERS [*politely*] Not at all Pray don't think that.

MRS HYERING. Well, a little good manners never does any harm, but I tell you straight, Mister Angel, I can't feel as if there was anything particular happening, in spite of you and your wings I've only just had my tea; and I can't feel a bit serious without any preparation or even an organ playing.

THE ANGEL You will feel serious enough presently when things begin to happen.

MRS HYERING Yes, but what things?

THE ANGEL What was foretold to you "His angels shall gather together his elect Then shall two be in the field the one shall be taken and the other left Two women shall be grinding at the mill The one shall be taken and the other left"

MRS HYERING. But which? That's what I want to know

PROLA There is nothing new in this taking of the one and leaving the other natural death has always been doing it

THE ANGEL. Natural death does it senselessly, like a blind child throwing stones We angels are executing a judgment The lives which have no use, no meaning, no purpose, will fade out You will have to justify your existence or perish Only the elect shall survive

MRS HYERING But where does the end of the world come in?

THE ANGEL The Day of Judgment is not the end of the world, but the end of its childhood and the beginning of its responsible maturity So now you know, and my business with you is ended [*He rises*] Is there any way of getting out on the roof of this house?

SIR CHARLES [*rising*] Certainly it is a flat roof where we often sit [*He leads the way to the house*]

KANCHIN In theory

JANGA In fact we never sit there

THE ANGEL. That does not matter All I want is a parapet to take off from Like the albatross, I cannot rise from the ground without great difficulty An angel is far from being the perfect organism you imagine There is always something better

VASHTI *Excelsior*

ALL FOUR [*rising and singing vociferously*]
Eck-cel-see-orr! Eck-cel-see-orr!

THE ANGEL [*putting his fingers in his ears*]
Please, no In heaven we are tired of singing
It is not done now [*He follows Sir Charles out*]

KANCHIN Lets see him take off

The four rush up the garden and look up at the roof The others rise and watch

JANGA [*calling up*] Start into the wind, old man Spring off hard, from the ball of the foot Dont fall on us

KANCHIN Oopsh! Off he goes

The beating of the angel's wings is heard

VASHTI He makes a noise like a vacuum cleaner

MAYA [*wafting kisses*] Goodbye, silly old Excelsior

The noise stops

JANGA His wings have stopped beating He is soaring up the wind

KANCHIN He is getting smaller and smaller His speed must be terrific

MAYA He is too small for an albatross

VASHTI He is smaller than a canary

KANCHIN He is out of sight

MAYA. There! One last ghnt of the sun on his wings He is gone

The four troop back and resume their seats The others sit as before, except that Iddy deserts Prola and sits on the well parapet Sir Charles returns from the house with a batch of wireless messages in his hand

SIR CHARLES [*sitting in his former place*]
Well, my dears the Judgment Day is over, it seems

IDDY. I cant believe it was the Judgment Day

PRA Why?

IDDY Well, I thought some special notice would have been taken of the clergy Reserved seats or something like that But he treated me as if I were only the organ blower

SIR CHARLES There are such a lot of priests in the world, Iddy It would be impossible to reserve seats for them all

IDDY Oh, I meant only the clergy of the Church of England, of course

MRS HYERING What I cant get over is their sending along just one angel to judge us, as if we didnt matter

LADY FARWATERS He actually went away and forgot to judge us

PRA I am not so sure of that.

IDDY Well, are we sheep or goats? tell me that

MAYA You are a sheep, Iddy, my sweet there can be no doubt about that

IDDY [*bursting into tears*] I love you, Maya, and you always say unkind things to me [*He rushes away through the garden, sobbing*]

MAYA Oh, poor Iddy! I'll go and soothe him with a thousand kisses [*She runs after him*]

HYERING [*to Sir Charles*] What have you got there? Any news from London?

SIR CHARLES Yes Exchange Telegraph and Reuters Copyright reserved

HYERING Lets have it

SIR CHARLES [*reading*] "Judgment Day Widespread incredulity as to anything having really happened. Reported appearance of angels in several quarters generally disbelieved. Several witnesses are qualifying or withdrawing their statements in deference to the prevailing scepticism"

HYERING We shall have to be careful too, Charles Who will believe us if we tell this yarn of an angel flying down into the garden?

SIR CHARLES I suppose so I never thought of it in that way Still, listen to this [*Reading*] "Policeman who attempted to arrest angel in Leicester Square removed to mental hospital Church Assembly at Lambeth Palace decides by a large majority that there has been a Visitation Dissenting minority, led by the Bishop of Edgbaston, denounces the reports as nonsense that would not impose even on the Society for Psychical Research"

His Holiness the Pope warns Christendom that supernatural communications reaching the earth otherwise than through the Church are contrary to the Catholic faith, and, if authentic, must be regarded as demoniacal Cabinet hastily summoned to discuss the situation. Prime Minister, speaking in emergency meeting at the Mansion House, declares that reports of utterances by angels are hopelessly contradictory, and that alleged verbatim reports by shorthand writers contain vulgar expressions The Government could not in any case allow the British Empire to be placed in the position of being judged by a commission of a few angels instead of by direct divine authority Such a slight to the flag would never be tolerated by Englishmen, and the Cabinet was unanimous in refusing to believe that such an outrage had occurred The Prime Minister's

speech was received with thunderous applause, the audience rising spontaneously to sing the National Anthem."

PRA They would

SIR CHARLES [*looking at another paper*] Hallo! Whats this? [*Reading*] "Later During the singing of the second verse of the National Anthem at the Mansion House the proceedings were interrupted by the appearance of an angel with a flaming sword who demanded truculently what they meant by ordering God about to do their dirty political work. He was accompanied by unruly cherubim who floated about tweaking the Lord Mayor's nose, pouring ink into the Prime Minister's hat, and singing derisively Confound Their Poll-It-Ticks Part of the audience fell to their knees, repeating the Confession Others rushed frantically to the doors Two Salvation lasses stemmed the rush, at great personal danger to themselves, by standing in the doorway and singing Let Angels Prostrate Fall Order was restored by the Prime Minister, who offered the angel an unreserved apology and an undertaking that the offending verse should not be sung again A new one is to be provided by the Poet Laureate The Premier's last words were lost through the misconduct of a cherub who butted him violently in the solar plexus A wave of the angel's sword and a terrible thunderclap then threw the entire audience prone to the floor When they rose to their feet the angel and the cherubs had disappeared."

HYERING. Oh, an invention. We cant swallow those cherubs, really.

SIR CHARLES [*taking up a third paper*] This sounds a little more plausible "A representative of the Fascist Press has called at the War Office to ask whether any steps are being taken to defend the right of public meeting, and to deal with the angelic peril The Commander-in-Chief, whilst denying that there is any such thing as a right of public meeting by undisciplined and irresponsible persons, declared that the Mansion House incident was quite incomprehensible to him, as he could not conceive how the only really practical part of the National Anthem could give any offence Any suggestion that it was not the plain duty of the Ruler of the Universe to confound England's enemies could only lead to widespread atheism. The First Lord of the Admiralty, interviewed last

night, said that he could not make head or tail of the reports, but that he could assure the public that whatever had really happened, the British Navy would not take it lying down Later A Hyde Park orator was thrown into the Serpentine for saying that the British Empire was not the only pebble on the beach. He has been fined thirty shillings for being in unlawful possession of a life buoy, the property of the Royal Humane Society There can be no doubt that the disparaging remarks and assumed superiority of the angels has started a wave of patriotism throughout the country which is bound to lead to action of some sort "

PRA Which means, if it means anything, that England's next war will be a war with heaven.

PROLA. Nothing new in that England has been at war with heaven for many a long year

VASHTI [*inspired*] The most splendid of all her wars!

KANCHIN. The last conquest left to her to achieve!

VASHTI To overcome the angels!

JANGA To plant the flag of England on the ramparts of heaven itself! that is the final glory

PROLA Oh go away, children. go away Now that Maya has gone to kiss somebody, there is nothing left for you to glorify but suicide

VASHTI [*rising*] I rebel

JANGA [*rising*] We rebel against Prola, the goddess empress

KANCHIN [*rising*] Prola has turned back from the forlorn hope

VASHTI Prola is a coward She fears defeat and death.

KANCHIN Without death there can be no heroism.

JANGA Without faith unto death there can be no faith

VASHTI Prola has failed us in the great Day of Judgment.

KANCHIN Our souls have been called to their final account

ALL THREE [*marching away through the garden*] Guilty, Prola guilty Adieu, Prola!

PROLA. Oh, adieu until you all want your tea

PRA. We have taught them everything except common sense.

LADY FARWATERS. We have taught them

everything except how to work for their daily bread instead of praying for it

PROLA It is dangerous to educate fools

PRA It is still more dangerous to leave them uneducated.

MRS HYERING There just shouldnt be any fools They wernt born fools we made fools of them

PRA We must stop making fools

Iddy returns alone Something strange has happened to him He stares at them and tries to speak, but no sound comes from his lips

LADY FARWATERS What on earth is the matter with you, Iddy? Have you been drinking?

IDDY [*in a ghastly voice*] Maya

PROLA What has happened to Maya?

IDDY Heaven and earth shall pass away, but I shall not pass away That is what she said. And then there was nothing in my arms Nothing Nothing in my arms Heaven and earth would pass away, but the love of Maya would never pass away And there was nothing [*He collapses on the well parapet, overcome, not in tears but in a profound awe*]

PRA Do you mean that she died in your arms?

IDDY Died? No I tell you there was nothing Dont you understand? Where she had just been there was nothing There never had been anything

PROLA And the others? Quick, Pra go and find the others

PRA What others?

PROLA The other three our children I forget their names

IDDY They said "Our names shall live forever" What were their names?

HYERING They have gone clean out of my head

SIR CHARLES Most extraordinary I cant for the life of me remember How many of them did you say there were, Prola?

PROLA Four Or was it four hundred?

IDDY There were four Their names were Love, Pride, Heroism and Empire Love's pet name was Maya I loved Maya. I loved them all, but it was through love of Maya that I loved them I held Maya in my arms She promised to endure for ever, and suddenly there was nothing in my arms I have searched for the others, but she and they were one I found nothing It is the Judgment.

PROLA Has she left a great void in your

heart, Iddy, that girl who turned to nothing in your arms?

IDDY No This is a beautiful climate, and you are beautiful people, but you are not real to me, and the sun here is not what it is in the valley of the Severn I am glad I am an English clergyman A village and a cottage a garden and a church these things will not turn to nothing I shall be content with my little black coat and my little white collar and my little treasure of words spoken by my Lord Jesus Blessed be the name of the Lord I shall not forget it as I shall forget Maya's. [*He goes out seaward like a man in a trance*]

LADY FARWATERS [*troubled, half rising*] But, Iddy,—

PROLA Let him go The pigeon knows its way home

Lady Farwaters sinks back into her seat There is a moment of rather solemn silence Then the telephone rings

PRA [*taking up the receiver*] Yes? What?

Yes amazing news we know all about that What is the latest? Yes "plot to destroy our most valuable citizens" I got that, but what was the first word? What plot? Oh, Russian plot Rubbish! havnt you some sensible reports? . Special news broadcast just coming in? Good put me on to it [*To the others*] Im through to London Regional Listen I'll repeat it as it comes [*He echoes the news*] Extraordinary disappearances Indescribable panic Stock Exchange closes only two members left House of Commons decimated only fourteen members to be found none of Cabinet rank. House of Lords still musters fifty members, but not one of them has ever attended a meeting of the Chamber Mayfair a desert six hotels left without a single guest Fresh disappearances Crowded intercession service at Westminster Abbey brought to a close by disappearance of the congregation at such a rate that the rest fled leaving the dean preaching to the choir At the Royal Institution Sir Ruthless Bonehead, Egregious Professor of Mechanistic Biology to the Rockefeller Foundation, drew a crowded audience to hear his address on "Whither have they gone?" He disappeared as he opened his mouth to speak. Noted Cambridge professor suggests that what is happening is a weeding-out of nonentities He has been deprived of his Chair, and The Times, in a leading article,

oints out that the extreme gravity of the situation lies in the fact that not only is it our most important people who are vanishing, but that it is the most unquestionably useful and popular professions that are most heavily attacked, the medical profession having disappeared almost en bloc, whilst the lawyers and clergy are comparatively immune. A situation of terrible suspense has been created everywhere. Happy husbands and fathers disappear from the family dinner with the soup. Several popular leaders of fashion and famous beauties, after ringing their bells for their maids, have been found non-existent when the bells were answered. More than a million persons have disappeared from the act of reading novels. The Morning Post contains an eloquent protest by Lady Gushing, president of the Titled Ladies' League of Social Service, on the inequality of sacrifice as between the west end and the east, where casualties have been comparatively few. Lady Gushing has since disappeared. There is general agreement that our losses are irreparable, though their bad effects are as yet unfelt. But before long—

HYERING. What's the use of going on, Pra? The angels are weeding the garden. The useless people, the mischievous people, the selfish somebodies and the noisy nobodies, are dissolving into space, which is the simplest form of matter. We here are awaiting our own doom.

MRS HYERING. What was it the angel said? PROLA. The lives which have no use, no meaning, no purpose, will fade out. We shall have to justify our existences or perish. We shall live under a constant sense of that responsibility. If the angels fail us we shall set up tribunals of our own from which worthless people will not come out alive. When men no longer fear the judgment of God, they must learn to judge themselves.

SIR CHARLES. I seem to remember somebody saying "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

PROLA. That means "Punish not, that ye be not punished." This is not punishment, but judgment.

HYERING. What is judgment?

PRA. Judgment is valuation. Civilizations live by their valuations. If the valuations are false, the civilization perishes as all the ancient ones we know of did. We are not being punished today; we are being valued. That is the Newest Dispensation.

LADY FARWATERS. I feel an absolute conviction that I shall not disappear and that Charles will not disappear. We have done some queer things here in the east perhaps, but at bottom we are comfortable common-sense probable English people; and we shall not do anything so improbable as disappear.

SIR CHARLES [*to his wife*]. Do not tempt the angels, my dear. Remember you used to distribute tracts before you met Pra.

LADY FARWATERS. Ssh-sh-sh! Don't remind the angels of those tracts.

HYERING [*rising*]. Look here. I have an uneasy feeling that we'd better get back to our work. I feel pretty sure that we shant disappear as long as we're doing something useful, but if we only sit here talking, either we shall disappear or the people who are listening to us will. What we have learnt here today is that the day of judgment is not the end of the world but the beginning of real human responsibility. Charles and I have still our duties. The Unexpected Islands have to be governed today just as they had to be yesterday. Sally, if you have given your orders for the housework today, go and cook something or sew something or tidy up the books. Come on, Charles. Let's get to work. [*He goes into the house*].

SIR CHARLES [*to his wife, rising*]. You might take a turn in the garden, dear. Gardening is the only unquestionably useful job. [*He follows Hyering into the house*].

LADY FARWATERS [*rising*]. Prola, shall I bring you some knitting to occupy you?

PROLA. No, thank you. I have some thinking to do.

LADY FARWATERS. Well, dear. I hope that will count as work. I shall feel safer with my gardening basket. [*She goes into the house*].

MRS HYERING. J'you think it'll be all right if I go and do some crossword puzzles? It cultivates the mind so, don't you think?

PROLA. Does it? Well, do the puzzles and see what will happen. Let life come to you. Goodbye.

MRS HYERING [*alarmed*]. Why do you say goodbye? Do you think I am going to disappear?

PROLA. Possibly. Or possibly I may.

MRS HYERING. Oh then for heaven's sake don't do it in my presence. Wait til I've gone.

She scuttles up the steps into the house, leaving Prola and Pra alone together.

PRA. Tell me the truth, Prola. Are you wait-

ing for me to disappear? Do you feel that you can do better without me? Have you always felt that you could do better without me?

PROLA That is a murderer's thought. Have you ever let yourself think it? How often have you said to yourself "I could do better alone, or with another woman"?

PRA Fairly often, my dear, when we were younger. But I did not murder you. That's the answer. And you?

PROLA All that stuff belongs to the past to the childhood of our marriage. We have now grown together until we are each of us a part of the other. I no longer think of you as a separate possibility.

PRA. I know. I am part of the furniture of your house. I am a matter of course. But was I always that? Was I that in the childhood of our marriage?

PROLA You are still young enough and man-like enough to ask mischievous questions.

PRA No matter we shall both disappear presently, and I have still some curiosity left. Did you ever really care for me? I know I began as a passion and have ended as a habit, like all husbands, but outside that routine there is a life of the intellect that is quite independent of it. What have I been to you in that life? A help or a hindrance?

PROLA Pra. I always knew from the very beginning that you were an extraordinarily clever fool.

PRA Good. That is exactly what I am.

PROLA But I knew also that nobody but a fool would be frivolous enough to join me in doing all the mad things I wanted to do. And no ordinary fool would have been subtle enough to understand me, nor clever enough to keep off the rocks of social ruin. I've grown fond enough of you for all practical purposes,—

PRA Thank you.

PROLA —but I've never allowed you or any other man to cut me off my own stem and make me a parasite on his. That sort of love and sacrifice is not the consummation of a capable woman's existence. It is the temptation she must resist at all costs.

PRA That temptation lies in the man's path too. The worst sacrifices I have seen have been those of men's highest careers to women's vulgarities and follies.

PROLA Well, we two have no reproaches and no regrets on that score.

PRA. No. We are awaiting judgment here

quite simply as a union of a madwoman with a fool.

PROLA Who thought they had created four wonderful children. And who are now brought to judgment and convicted of having created nothing. We have only repeated the story of Helen and Faust and their beautiful child Euphorion. Euphorion also vanished, in his highest flight.

PRA Yes, but Helen was a dream. You are not a dream. The children did not vanish like Euphorion in their infancy. They grew up to bore me more intensely than I have ever been bored by any other set of human creatures. Come, confess did they not bore you?

PROLA Have I denied it? Of course they bored me. They must have bored one another terribly in spite of all their dressing up and pretending that their fairyland was real. How they must have envied the gardener's boy his high spirits!

PRA The coming race will not be like them. Meanwhile we are face to face with the fact that we two have made a precious mess of our job of producing the coming race by a mixture of east and west. We are failures. We shall disappear.

PROLA I do not feel like that. I feel like the leader of a cavalry charge whose horse has been shot through the head and dropped dead under him. Well, a dead hobby horse is not the end of the world. Remember we are in the Unexpected Isles, and in the Unexpected Isles all plans fail. So much the better. Plans are only jigsaw puzzles. One gets tired of them long before one can piece them together. There are still a million lives beyond all the Utopias and the Millenniums and the rest of the jigsaw puzzles. I am a woman and I know it. Let men despair and become cynics and pessimists because in the Unexpected Isles all their little plans fail. Women will never let go their hold on life. We are not here to fulfil prophecies and fit ourselves into puzzles, but to wrestle with life as it comes. And it never comes as we expect it to come.

PRA It comes like a thief in the night.

PROLA Or like a lover. Never will Prola go back to the Country of the Expected.

PRA. There is no Country of the Expected. The Unexpected Isles are the whole world.

PROLA Yes, if our fools only had vision enough to see that. I tell you this is a world of miracles, not of jigsaw puzzles. For me

every day must have its miracle, and no child be born like any child that ever was born before And to witness this miracle of the children I will abide the uttermost evil and carry through it the seed of the uttermost good.

PRA Then I, Pra, must continue to strive for more knowledge and more power, though the new knowledge always contradicts the old, and the new power is the destruction of the fools who misuse it.

PROLA. We shall plan commonwealths when our empires have brought us to the brink of destruction, but our plans will still lead us to the Unexpected Isles. We shall make wars because only under the strain of war are we capable of changing the world; but the changes our wars will make will never be the changes we intended them to make. We shall clamor for security like frightened

children, but in the Unexpected Isles there is no security, and the future is to those who prefer surprise and wonder to security. I, Prola, shall live and grow because surprise and wonder are the very breath of my being, and routine is death to me. Let every day be a day of wonder for me and I shall not fear the Day of Judgment. [*She is interrupted by a roll of thunder*] Be silent you cannot frighten Prola with stage thunder. The fountain of life is within me

PRA. But you have given the key of it to me, the Man

PROLA. Yes. I need you and you need me. Life needs us both

PRA. All hail, then, the life to come!

PROLA. All Hail. Let it come.

They pat hands, eastern fashion.

THE END

XLIV

THE SIX OF CALAIS

A D 4th August 1347. Before the walls of Calais on the last day of the siege The pavilion of Edward III, King of England, is on your left as you face the walls The pavilion of his consort Philippa of Hainault is on your right Between them, near the King's pavilion, is a two-seated chair of state for public audiences. Crowds of tents cover the background, but there is a clear way in the middle through the camp to the great gate of the city with its drawbridge still up and its flag still flying

The Black Prince, aged 17, arrives impetuously past the Queen's tent, a groom running after him

THE PRINCE Here is the King's pavilion without a single attendant to announce me What can the matter be?

A child's scream is heard from the royal pavilion, and John of Gaunt, aged 7, dashes out and is making for his mother's tent when the Prince seizes him

THE PRINCE How now, Johnny? Whats the matter?

JOHN [*struggling*] Let me go. Father is in a frightful wax.

THE PRINCE I shall be in a wax myself presently [*Releasing him*] Off with you to mother [*The child takes refuge in the Queen's pavilion*]

THE KING'S VOICE Grit! Yah! Why was I not told? Gogswoons, why was I not told? [*Ednard III, aged 35, dashes from his pavilion, foaming*] Out! [*The groom flies for his life*] How long have you been here? They never tell me anything I might be a dog instead of a king

THE PRINCE [*about to kneel*] Majesty—

THE KING No no. enough of that. Your news Anything from Scotland? Anything from Wales?

THE PRINCE I—

THE KING [*not waiting for the answer*] The state of things here is past words. The wrath of God and all his saints is upon this expedition

THE PRINCE I hope not, sir. I—

THE KING [*raging on*] May God wither and blast this accursed town! You would have thought that these dogs would have come out of their kennels and grovelled for mercy at my summons. Am I not their lawful king, ha?

THE PRINCE Undoubtedly, sir They—

THE KING They have held me up for twelve months! A whole year! My business ruined! My plans upset! My money exhausted! Death, disease, mutiny, a dog's life here in the field winter and summer. The bitch's

bastard who is in command of their walls came to demand terms from me! to demand terms!! looked me straight in the eyes with his head up as if I—I, his king! were dirt beneath his feet By God, I will have that head I will lick it to my dogs to eat I will chop his insolent herald into four quarters—

THE PRINCE [*shocked*] Oh no, sir not a herald you cannot do that

THE KING They have driven me to such extremity that I am capable of cutting all the heralds in Christendom into their quarterings [*He sits down in his chair of state and suddenly becomes ridiculously sentimental*] I have not told you the worst Your mother, the Queen, my Philippa, is here here! Edward, in her delicate state of health Even that did not move them They want her to die they are trying to murder her and our innocent unborn child Think of that, boy oh, think of that [*he almost weeps*]

THE PRINCE Softly, father that is not their fault it is yours

THE KING Would you make a jest of this? If it is not their fault it shall be their misfortune, for I will have every man, woman, and child torn to pieces with red hot pincers for it

THE PRINCE Truly, dear Sir, you have great cause to be annoyed, but in sober earnest how does the matter stand? They must be suffering the last extremity of famine Their walls may hold out, but their stomachs cannot. Cannot you offer them some sort of terms to end the business? Money is running short Time is running short You only make them more desperate by threatening them Remember it is good policy to build a bridge of silver for a flying foe

THE KING Do I not know it? Have I not been kind, magnanimous? Have I not done all that Christian chivalry could require of me? And they abuse my kindness it only encourages them they despise me for it

THE PRINCE What terms have you offered them?

THE KING I have not threatened the life of a single knight I have said that no man of gentle condition and noble blood shall be denied quarter and ransom It was their knightly duty to make a show of arms against me But [*rising wrathfully*] these base rascals of burgesses these huckstering hounds of merchants who have made this port of Calais a nest of pirates these usurers and trades-

men these rebel curs who have dared to take up arms against their betters am I to pardon their presumption? I should be false to our order, to Christendom, if I did not make a signal example

THE PRINCE By all means, sir But what have you demanded?

THE KING SIX of the most purseproud of their burgesses, as they call themselves—by God, they begin to give themselves the airs of barons—six of them are to come in their shirts with halters round their necks for me to hang in the sight of all their people [*Raising his voice again and storming*] They shall die the dog's death they deserve They shall—

A court lady comes in

THE COURT LADY Sir the Queen Sssh!

THE KING [*subsiding to a whisper*] The Queen! Boy not a word here Her condition she must not be upset she takes these things so amiss be discreet, for heaven's sake

Queen Philippa, aged 33, comes from her pavilion, attended

THE QUEEN Dear child welcome

THE PRINCE How do you, lady mother? [*He kisses her hand*]

THE KING [*solicitously*] Madam are you well wrapped up? Is it wise to come into the cold air here? Had they better not bring a brazier and some cushions, and a hot drink—a posset—

THE QUEEN [*curtseying*] Sir beloved dont fuss I am very well, and the air does me good. [*To the Prince*] You must cheer up your father, my precious He will fret about my health when it is his own that needs care I have borne him eleven children, and St Anne be my witness they have cost less looking after than this one big soldier, the greatest baby of them all [*To the King*] Have you put on your flannel belly band, dearest?

THE KING Yes, yes, yes, my love do not bother about me Think of yourself and our child—

THE QUEEN Oh, leave me to take care of myself and the child. I am no maternal malignreuse I promise you. And now, sir sonny, tell me all your news I—

She is interrupted by a shrill trumpet call

THE KING What is that? What now?

John of Gaunt, who has been up to the town gates to see the fun, runs in excitedly

JOHN OF GAUNT [*bending his knee very perfunctorily*] Sir they have surrendered, the drawbridge is down The six old men have

me out in their shirts with ropes round
eir necks.

THE KING [*clouting him*] Sssh! Hold your
ague, you young devil.

THE QUEEN Old men in their shirts in this
rather! They will catch cold.

THE KING It is nothing, madam my love—
ly the ceremony of surrender You must
in it is not fitting that these half naked
en should be in your presence. I will deal
th them

THE QUEEN. Do not keep them too long in
e cold, dearest sir

THE KING [*uxoriously waving her a kiss*] My
ve!

*The Queen goes into her pavilion; and a
oup of noblemen attendant on the King, in-
ding Sir Walter Manny and the Lords Derby,
orthampton, and Arundel, issue from their
ts and assemble behind the chair of state,
ere they are joined by the Black Prince, who
nds at the King's right hand and takes charge
John of Gaunt*

THE KING Now for these swine, these
oodsuckers. They shall learn—[*shouting*]
tch me these fellows in here Drag them
I'll teach them to hold me up here for
elve months I'll—

*The six burgesses, hustled by men-at-arms,
ter in their shirts and halters, each carrying a
nch of massive iron keys. Their leader,
ustache de St Pierre, kneels at the King's feet.
ur of his fellow victims, Piers de Wissant,
cques de Wissant, Jean d'Aire, and Gilles
Oudebolle, kneel in pairs behind him, and,
llowing his example, lay their keys on the
ound They are deeply cast down, bearing
emselves like condemned men, yet maintaining
melancholy dignity Not so the sixth, Piers de
osty (nicknamed Hardmouth), the only one
thout a grey or white beard He has an extra-
dinarily dogged chin with a few bristles on it
e deliberately separates himself from the rest
passing behind the royal chair to the King's
ght and planting himself stiffly erect in an at-
tude of intense recalcitrance The King, scowl-
g fiercely at St Pierre and the rest, does not
tice this until Peter flings down his keys with a
lence which suggests that he would very nil-
gly have brained Edward with them*

THE KING On your knees, hound

PETER I am a good dog, but not of your
nnel, Neddy

THE KING Neddy!!!

PETER. Order your own curs, I am a free

burgess and take commands from nobody.

*Before the amazed monarch can retort,
Eustache appeals to Peter.*

EUSTACHE Master Peter. if you have no
regard for yourself, remember that our
people, our wives and children, are at the
mercy of this great king

PETER You mistake him for his grand-
father. Great! [*He spits*]

EUSTACHE. Is this your promise to be
patient?

PETER Why waste civilities on him, Master
Mayor? He can do no worse than hang us,
and as to the town, I would have burnt it to
the last brick, and every man, woman, and
child along with it, sooner than surrender. I
came here to make up the tale of six to be
hanged Well, he can hang me, but he shall
not outface me. I am as good a dog as he, any
day in the week

THE PRINCE Fie, fellow! is this a way for
one of thy degree to speak to an anointed
king? Bear thyself as befits one of thy degree
in the royal presence, or by Holy Paul—

PETER You know how we have borne our-
selves in his royal presence these twelve
months. We have made some of you skip
Famine and not you, has beaten us. Give me a
square meal and a good sword and stake all
on a fair single combat with this big bully, or
his black whelp here if he is afraid of me; and
we shall see which is the better dog of the two.

THE KING Drag him to his knees Ham-
string him if he resists

*Three men-at-arms dash at Peter and drag
him to his knees They take his halter and tie his
ankles and wrists with it Then they fling him
on his side, where he lies helpless*

THE KING And so, Master Burgess—

PETER. Bow-wow-wow!

THE KING [*furious*] Gag him. Gogswoons,
gag him

*They tear a piece of linen from the back of his
shirt, and bind his mouth with it He barks to the
last moment John of Gaunt laughs ecstatically
at this performance, and sets off some of the
soldiers*

THE KING If a man laughs I will have him
flayed alive

Dead silence

THE KING And now, fellows, what have ye^a
to say to excuse your hardy and stubborn
resistance for all these months to me, your
king?

EUSTACHE Sir, we are not fellows We are

free burgesses of this great city

THE KING Free burgesses! Are you still singing that song? Well, I will bend the necks of your burgesses when the hangman has broken yours Am I not your overlord? Am I not your anointed king?

EUSTACHE That is your claim, sir, and you have made it good by force of arms We must submit to you and to God

THE KING Leave God out of this! What hast thou or thy like to do with God?

EUSTACHE Nothing, sir we would not so far presume But with due respect to your greatness I would humbly submit to your Majesty that God may have something to do with us, seeing that he created us all alike and redeemed us by the blood of his beloved son

THE KING [*to the Prince*] Can you make head or tail of this, boy? Is he accusing me of impiety? If he is, by God—

EUSTACHE Sir, is it for me to accuse you of anything? Here we kneel in the dust before you, naked and with the ropes on our necks with which you will presently send us into the presence of our maker and yours [*His teeth chatter*]

THE KING Ay you may well tremble You have cause

EUSTACHE Yes I tremble, and my teeth chatter the few I have left But you gentlemen that see our miserable plight, I call on your generosity as noblemen, on your chivalry as good knights, to bear witness for us that it is the cold of the morning and our naked condition that shakes us We kneel to implore your King's mercy for our wretched and starving townfolk, not for ourselves

THE KING Whose fault is it that they are starving? They have themselves to thank Why did they not open their gates to me? Why did they take arms against their anointed king? Why should I have mercy on them or on you?

EUSTACHE Sir one is merciful not for reasons, but for the love of God, at whose hand we must all sue for mercy at the end of our days

THE KING You shall not save yourself by preaching What right have you to preach? It is for churchmen and learned divines to speak of these mysteries, not for tradesmen and usurers I'll teach you to rebel against your betters, whom God has appointed to keep you in obedience and loyalty You are

traitors, and as traitors you shall die Thank my mercy that you are spared the torments that traitors and rebels suffer in England. [*Rising*] Away with them to the hangman, and let our trumpeters summon the townspeople to the walls to take warning from their dangling corpses

The three men-at-arms begin to lift Peter The others lay hands on his five colleagues

THE KING No let that hound lie Hanging is too good for him.

The Queen hurries in with her ladies in great concern The men-at-arms release the burgesses irresolutely It is evident that the Queen's arrival washes out all the King's orders

THE QUEEN Sir, what is this they tell me?

THE KING [*hurrying across to intercept her*] Madam this is no place for you I pray you, retire The business is one in which it becomes you not to meddle

THE QUEEN [*evading him and passing on to inspect the burgesses*] But these gentlemen They are almost naked It is neither seemly nor sufficient They are old they are half frozen they should be in their beds

THE KING They soon will be Leave us, madam This is business of State They are suffering no more than they deserve I beg and pray you—I command you—

THE QUEEN Dear sir, your wishes are my law and your commands my duty But these gentlemen are very cold

THE KING They will be colder presently, so you need not trouble about that Will it please you, madam, to withdraw at once?

THE QUEEN Instantly, my dear lord [*To Eustache*] Sir when his Majesty has ended his business with you, will you and your friends partake of some cups of hot wine in my pavilion? You shall be furnished with gowns

THE KING [*choking with wrath*] Hot w—!

EUSTACHE Alas, madam, when the King has ended his business with us we shall need nothing but our coffins I also beg you to withdraw and hasten our despatch to that court where we shall not be held guilty for defending our hearths and homes to the last extremity The King will not be balked of his revenge, and we are shriven and ready

THE QUEEN Oh, you mistake, sir the King is incapable of revenge my husband is the flower of chivalry

EUSTACHE You little know your husband, madam We know better what to expect

from Edward Plantagenet.

THE KING [*coming to him threateningly past his consort*] Ha! do you, Master Merchant? You know better than the Queen! You and your like know what to expect from your lords and rulers! Well, this time you shall not be disappointed. You have guessed aright. You shall hang, every man of you, in your shirts, to make mirth for my horseboys and their trulls.

THE QUEEN. Oh no—

THE KING [*thundering*] Madam I forbid you to speak I bade you go you would not; and now you shall see what I would have spared you had you been obedient By God, I will be master in my own house and king in my own camps Take these fellows out and hang them in their white beards

The King takes his place on his chair of state with his arms folded implacably The Queen follows him slowly and desolately She takes her place beside him The dead silence is very trying.

THE QUEEN [*drooping in tears and covering her face with her hands*] Oh!

THE KING [*flinching*] No no no no NO. Take her away

THE QUEEN Sir. I have been always a great trouble to you. I have asked you for a thousand favors and graces and presents. I am impatient and ungrateful, ever asking, asking, asking Have you ever refused me even once?

THE KING Well, is that a reason why I should give and grant, grant and give, for ever? Am I never to have my own way?

THE QUEEN Oh, dearest sir, when next I ask you for a great thing, refuse me teach me a lesson But this is such a little thing [*Heart-broken*] I cannot bear your refusing me a little thing.

THE KING A little thing! You call this a little thing!

THE QUEEN. A very very little thing, sir You are the King you have at your disposal thousands of lives all our lives from the noblest to the meanest. All the lives in that city are in your hand to do as you will with in this your hour of victory it is as if you were God himself You said once that you would lead ten kings captive to my feet. Much as I have begged from you I have never asked for my ten kings I ask only for six old merchants, men beneath your royal notice, as my share of the spoils of your conquest Their ransom will hardly buy me

a new girdle; and oh, dear sir, you know that my old one is becoming too strait for me. Will you keep me begging so?

THE KING I see very well that I shall not be allowed my own way [*He begins to cry*].

THE QUEEN [*throwing her arms round him*] Oh, dear sir, you know I would die to spare you a moment's distress. There, there, dearest! [*She pets him*]

THE KING [*blubbering*] I am never allowed to do anything I want I might as well be a dog as a king You treat me like a baby.

THE QUEEN Ah no you are the greatest of kings to me, the noblest of men, my dearest lord and my dearest dearest love. [*Throwing herself on her knees*] Listen, do as you will: I will not say another word I ask nothing.

THE KING. No you ask nothing because you know you will get everything [*He rises, shouting*] Take those men out of my sight

THE PRINCE. What shall we do with them, sir?

THE KING [*flinging himself back into his seat*] Ask the Queen. Banquet them feast them give them my crown, my kingdom Give them the clothes off my back, the bread out of my mouth, only take them away. Will you go, curses on you

The five burgesses kneel gratefully to the Queen.

EUSTACHE [*kissing her hand*] Madam. our ransom shall buy you a threefold girdle of gold and a cradle of silver

THE KING Aye, well, see that it does: see that it does

The burgesses retire, bowing to the Queen, who, still on her knees, waves her hand graciously to them.

THE QUEEN. Will you not help me up, dear sir?

THE KING. Oh yes, yes [*raising her*]. you should be more careful. who knows what harm you may have done yourself flopping on your knees like that?

THE QUEEN I have done myself no harm, dear sir; but you have done me a world of good I have never been better nor happier in my life Look at me Do I not look radiant?

THE KING And how do I look? Like a fool.

JOHN OF GAUNT Sir. the men-at-arms want to know what they are to do with this fellow?

THE KING. Aye, I forgot him. Fetch him here.

The three men-at-arms carry Peter to the King, and fling him down. The King is now

grinning His paroxysm of tears has completely discharged his ill temper It dawns on him that through Peter he may get even with Philippa for his recent domestic defeat

THE QUEEN Oh, the poor man has not even a proper shirt to wear It is all torn it is hardly decent

THE KING Look well at this man, madam He defied me He spat at me There is no insult that he did not heap on me He looked me in the face and spoke to me as if I were a scullion I swear to you by the Holy Rood, he called me Neddy! Donkeys are called Neddy What have you to say now? Is he, too, to be spared and petted and fed and have a gown from you?

THE QUEEN [*going to Peter*] But he is blue with cold I fear he is dying Untie him Lift him up Take that bandage off his mouth Fie fie! I believe it is the tail of his shirt

THE KING It is cleaner than his tongue

The men-at-arms release Peter from his bonds and his gag He is too stiff to rise. They pull him to his feet

PETER [*as they lift him groaning and swearing*] Ah-ooh-oh-ow!

THE KING Well? Have you learnt your lesson? Are you ready to sue for the Queen's mercy?

PETER Yah! Henpecked! Kiss mammy!

THE KING [*chuckles*]!

THE QUEEN [*severely*] Are you mad, Master Burgess? Do you not know that your life is in the King's hand? Do you expect me to recommend you to his mercy if you forget yourself in this unseemly fashion?

PETER Let me tell you, madam, that I came here in no ragged shirt I have a dozen shirts of as fine a web as ever went on your back Is it likely that I, a master mercer, would wear aught but the best of the best to go to my grave in?

THE QUEEN Mend your manners first, sir, and then mend your linen, or you shall have no countenance from me

PETER I have naught to do with you, madam, though I well see who wears the breeches in this royal household I am not skilled in dealing with fine handsome ladies Leave me to settle my business with your henpecked husband.

THE QUEEN You shall suffer for this insolence [*To the King*] Will you, my lord, stand by and hear me spoken to in this tone by a haberdasher?

THE KING [*grinning*] Nay I am in a merciful mood this morning The poor man is to be pitied, shivering there in his shirt with his tail torn off

PETER Shivering! You lie in your teeth, though you were fifty kings No man alive shall pity Peter Hardmouth, a dog of lousy Champagne

THE KING [*going to him*] Ha! A dog of Champagne! Oh, you must pardon this man, madam, for my grandmother hailed from that lousy province, so I also am a dog of Champagne We know one another's bark. [*Turning on him with bristling teeth*] Eh?

PETER [*growling in his face like a dog*] Grrrr!!!

THE KING [*returning the growl clun to clun*] Grrrr!!!!

They repeat this performance, to the great scandal of the Queen, until it develops into a startling imitation of a dog fight

THE QUEEN [*tearing the two dogs asunder*] Oh, for shame, sir! And you, fellow I will have you muzzled and led through the streets on a chain and lodged in a kennel.

THE KING Be merciful, lady I have asked you for many favors, and had them granted me too, as the world, please God, will soon have proof Will you deny me this?

THE QUEEN Will you mock my condition before this insolent man and before the world? I will not endure it

THE KING Faith, no, dearest no mockery But you have no skill in dealing with the dogs of lousy Champagne We must pity this poor trembling fellow

THE QUEEN [*angrily*] He is not trembling

PETER No, by all the saints in heaven and devils in hell. Well said, lass

He nudges her, to her extreme indignation

THE KING Hear that, dearest he calls thee lass Be kind to him He is only a poor old cur who has lost half his teeth His condition would move a heart of stone

PETER I may be an old cur, but if I had sworn to hang the six of us as he swore, no shrew should scold me out of it, nor any soft-bosomed beauty wheedle me out of it Yah, cry baby! Give her your sword and sit in the corner with her distaff The grey mare is the better horse here Do your worst, dame I like your spunk better than his snivel

THE QUEEN [*raging*] Send him away, sir He is too ugly, and his words are disgusting Such objects should be kept out of my sight would you have me bear you a monster?

Take him away.

THE KING Away with him Hurt him not, but let him not come into the Queen's presence Quick there Off with him

The men-at-arms lay hands on Peter who struggles violently

PETER Hands off me, spamels Arrr! Grrr! [*As they drag him out overpowered*] Gee-up, Neddy. [*He finishes with a spirited imitation of a donkey's bray*]

THE KING That is how they build men in Champagne By the Holy Rood I care not if

a bit of him gets into our baby

THE QUEEN Oh, for shame! for shame! Have men no decency?

The King snatches her into his arms, laughing boisterously The laugh spreads to all the soldiers and courtiers The whole camp seems in a hilarious uproar.

THE QUEEN No no' for shame! for shame!

The King stops her mouth with a kiss. Peter brays melodiously in the distance

THE END

XLV

THE MILLIONAIRESS

ACT I

Mr Julius Sagamore, a smart young solicitor, is in his office in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is a fine morning in May. The room, an old panelled one, is so arranged that Mr Sagamore, whom we see sitting under the window in profile with his back to it and his left side presented to us, is fenced off by his writing table from excessive intimacy with emotional clients or possible assault by violent or insane ones. The door is on his right towards the farther end of the room The faces of the clients are thus illuminated by the window whilst his own countenance is in shadow The fireplace, of Adams design, is in the wall facing him It is surmounted by a dingy portrait of a judge In the wall on his right, near the corner farthest from him, is the door, with a cleft pediment enshrining a bust of some other judge. The rest of this wall is occupied by shelves of calf-bound law books. The wall behind Mr Sagamore has the big window as aforesaid, and beside it a stand of black tin boxes inscribed with clients' names

So far, the place proclaims the eighteenth century, but as the year is 1935, and Mr Sagamore has no taste for dust and mould, and requires a room which suggests opulence, and in which lady clients will look their best, everything is well dusted and polished, the green carpet is new, rich, and thick, and the half dozen chairs, four of which are ranged under the bookshelves, are Chippendales of the very latest fake. Of the other two one is occupied by himself, and the other stands half way between his table and the fireplace for the accommodation of his clients

The telephone, on the table at his elbow, rings.

SAGAMORE [*listening*] Yes? . . . [*Impressed*] Oh! Send her up at once

A tragic looking woman, athletically built and expensively dressed, storms into the room He rises obsequiously.

THE LADY. Are you Julius Sagamore, the worthless nephew of my late solicitor Pontifex Sagamore?

SAGAMORE. I do not advertize myself as worthless; but Pontifex Sagamore was my uncle, and I have returned from Australia to succeed to as much of his business as I can persuade his clients to trust me with

THE LADY I have heard him speak of you, and I naturally concluded that as you had been packed off to Australia you must be worthless But it does not matter, as my business is very simple I desire to make my will, leaving everything I possess to my husband You can hardly go wrong about that, I suppose

SAGAMORE I shall do my best. Pray sit down.

THE LADY No I am restless. I shall sit down when I feel tired

SAGAMORE As you please. Before I draw up the will it will be necessary for me to know who your husband is.

THE LADY My husband is a fool and a blackguard. You will state that fact in the will You will add that it was his conduct that drove me to commit suicide.

SAGAMORE. But you have not committed suicide

THE LADY. I shall have, when the will is signed

SAGAMORE. Of course, quite so stupid of

me And his name?

THE LADY His name is Alastair Fitzfassen-den

SAGAMORE What! The amateur tennis champion and heavy weight boxer?

THE LADY Do you know him?

SAGAMORE Every morning we swim together at the club

THE LADY The acquaintance does you little credit

SAGAMORE. I had better tell you that he and I are great friends, Mrs Fitzfassen—

THE LADY Do not call me by his detestable name Put me in your books as Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga

SAGAMORE [*bowing*] Oh! I am indeed honored Pray be seated.

EPIFANIA Sit down yourself, and dont fuss

SAGAMORE If you prefer it, certainly [*He sits*] Your father was a very wonderful man, madam

EPIFANIA My father was the greatest man in the world. And he died a pauper I shall never forgive the world for that

SAGAMORE A pauper! You amaze me It was reported that he left you, his only child, thirty millions

EPIFANIA Well, what was thirty millions to him? He lost a hundred and fifty millions He had promised to leave me two hundred millions I was left with a beggarly thirty It broke his heart

SAGAMORE Still, an income of a million and a half—

EPIFANIA Man you forget the death duties I have barely seven hundred thousand a year Do you know what that means to a woman brought up on an income of seven figures? The humiliation of it!

SAGAMORE You take away my breath, madam

EPIFANIA As I am about to take my own breath away, I have no time to attend to yours.

SAGAMORE Oh, the suicide! I had forgotten that

EPIFANIA. Had you indeed? Well, will you please give your mind to it for a moment, and draw up a will for me to sign, leaving everything to Alastair

SAGAMORE To humiliate him?

EPIFANIA No To ruin him To destroy him. To make him a beggar on horseback so that he may ride to the devil Money goes to his head. I have seen it at work on him

SAGAMORE I also have seen that happen But you cannot be sure He might marry some sensible woman

EPIFANIA You are right Make it a condition of the inheritance that within a month from my funeral he marries a low female named Polly Seedystockings

SAGAMORE [*making a note of it*] A funny name

EPIFANIA Her real name is Patricia Smith But her letters to Alastair are signed Polly Seedystockings, as a hint, I suppose, that she wants him to buy her another dozen.

SAGAMORE [*taking another sheet of paper and writing*] I should like to know Polly

EPIFANIA Pray why?

SAGAMORE [*talking as he writes*] Well, if Alastair prefers her to you she must be indeed worth knowing I shall certainly make him introduce me

EPIFANIA You are hardly tactful, Julius Sagamore

SAGAMORE That will not matter when you have taken this [*he hands her what he has written*]

EPIFANIA Whats this?

SAGAMORE For the suicide You will have to sign the chemist's book for the cyanide Say it is for a wasp's nest The tartaric acid is harmless the chemist will think you want it to make lemonade Put the two separately in just enough water to dissolve them When you mix the two solutions the tartaric and potash will combine and make tartrate of potash This, being insoluble, will be precipitated to the bottom of the glass, and the supernatant fluid will be pure hydrocyanic acid, one sip of which will kill you 'like a thunderbolt

EPIFANIA [*fingering the prescription rather disconcertedly*] You seem to take my death very coolly, Mr Sagamore

SAGAMORE I am used to it

EPIFANIA Do you mean to tell me that you have so many clients driven to despair that you keep a prescription for them?

SAGAMORE I do It's infallible

EPIFANIA You are sure that they have all died painlessly and instantaneously?

SAGAMORE No They are all alive

EPIFANIA. Alive! The prescription is a harmless fraud!

SAGAMORE No It's a deadly poison But they dont take it

EPIFANIA Why?

SAGAMORE I dont know. But they never do.

EPIFANIA I will And I hope you will be hanged for giving it to me

SAGAMORE I am only acting as your solicitor. You say you are going to commit suicide, and you come to me for advice. I do my best for you, so that you can die without wasting a lot of gas or jumping into the Serpentine. Six and eightpence I shall charge your executors.

EPIFANIA. For advising me how to kill myself!

SAGAMORE. Not today. Tomorrow.

EPIFANIA Why put it off until tomorrow?

SAGAMORE Well, it will do as well tomorrow as today. And something amusing may happen this evening. Or even tomorrow evening. Theres no hurry

EPIFANIA You are a brute, a beast, and a pig. My life is nothing to you; you do not even ask what has driven me to this. You make money out of the death of your clients.

SAGAMORE. I do. There will be a lot of business connected with your death. Alastair is sure to come to me to settle your affairs.

EPIFANIA And you expect me to kill myself to make money for you?

SAGAMORE Well, it is you who have raised my expectations, madam.

EPIFANIA. O God, listen to this man! Has it ever occurred to you that when a woman's life is wrecked she needs a little sympathy and not a bottle of poison?

SAGAMORE I really cant sympathize with suicide. It doesnt appeal to me, somehow. Still, if it has to be done, it had better be done promptly and scientifically

EPIFANIA You dont even ask what Alastair has done to me?

SAGAMORE It wont matter what he has done to you when you are dead. Why bother about it?

EPIFANIA You are an unmitigated hog, Julius Sagamore.

SAGAMORE Why worry about me? The prescription will cure everything

EPIFANIA Damn your prescription. There! *[She tears it up and throws the pieces in his face]*

SAGAMORE *[beaming]* It's infallible. And now that you have blown off steam, suppose you sit down and tell me all about it.

EPIFANIA You call the outcry of an anguished heart blowing off steam, do you?

SAGAMORE. Well, what else would you call it?

EPIFANIA You are not a man; you are a rhinoceros. You are also a fool

SAGAMORE I am only a solicitor.

EPIFANIA. You are a rotten solicitor. You are not a gentleman. You insult me in my distress. You back up my husband against me. You have no decency, no understanding. You are a fish with the soul of a blackbeetle. Do you hear?

SAGAMORE Yes. I hear. And I congratulate myself on the number of actions for libel I shall have to defend if you do me the honor of making me your solicitor

EPIFANIA. You are wrong. I never utter a libel. My father instructed me most carefully in the law of libel. If I questioned your solvency, that would be a libel. If I suggested that you are unfaithful to your wife, that would be a libel. But if I call you a rhinoceros—which you are a most unmitigated rhinoceros—that is only vulgar abuse. I take good care to confine myself to vulgar abuse; and I have never had an action for libel taken against me. Is that the law, or is it not?

SAGAMORE. I really dont know. I will look it up in my law books

EPIFANIA You need not. I instruct you that it is the law. My father always had to instruct his lawyers in the law whenever he did anything except what everybody was doing every day. Solicitors know nothing of law. they are only good at practice, as they call it. My father was a great man every day of his life he did things that nobody else ever dreamt of doing. I am not, perhaps, a great woman; but I am his daughter; and as such I am an unusual woman. You will take the law from me and do exactly what I tell you to do

SAGAMORE. That will simplify our relations considerably, madam.

EPIFANIA And remember this. I have no sense of humor. I will not be laughed at.

SAGAMORE I should not dream of laughing at a client with an income of three quarters of a million

EPIFANIA. Have you a sense of humor?

SAGAMORE I try to keep it in check; but I am afraid I have a little. You appeal to it, somehow

EPIFANIA. Then I tell you in cold blood, after the most careful consideration of my words, that you are a heartless blackguard. My distress, my disgrace, my humiliation, the horrible mess and failure I have made of

my life seem to you merely funny If it were not that my father warned me never to employ a solicitor who had no sense of humor I would walk out of this office and deprive you of a client whose business may prove a fortune to you

SAGAMORE But, my dear lady, I dont know anything about your distress, your disgrace, the mess you have made of your life and all the rest of it How can I laugh at things I dont know? If I am laughing—and am I really laughing?—I assure you I am laughing, not at your misfortunes, but at you

EPIFANIA Indeed? Am I so comic a figure in my misery?

SAGAMORE But what is your misery? Do, pray, sit down

EPIFANIA You seem to have one idea in your head, and that is to get your clients to sit down. Well, to oblige you [*She sits down with a flounce The back of the chair snaps off short with a loud crack She springs up*] Oh, I cannot even sit down in a chair without wrecking it There is a curse on me

SAGAMORE [*collapses on the table, shaking with uncontrollable laughter*] ! ! ! !

EPIFANIA. Ay laugh, laugh, laugh Fool! Clown!

SAGAMORE [*rising resolutely and fetching another chair from the wall*] My best faked Chippendale gone It cost me four guineas [*Placing the chair for her*] Now will you please sit down as gently as you can, and stop calling me names? Then, if you wish, you can tell me what on earth is the matter [*He picks up the broken-off back of the chair and puts it on the table*]

EPIFANIA [*sitting down with dignity*] The breaking of that chair has calmed and relieved me somehow I feel as if I had broken your neck, as I wanted to Now listen to me [*He comes to her and looks down gravely at her*] And dont stand over me like that Sit down on what is left of your sham Chippendale

SAGAMORE Certainly [*he sits*] Now go ahead.

EPIFANIA My father was the greatest man in the world I was his only child His one dread was that I should make a foolish marriage, and lose the little money he was able to leave me

SAGAMORE The thirty millions Precisely

EPIFANIA Dont interrupt me He made me promise that whenever a man asked me to marry him I should impose a condition on my consent

SAGAMORE [*attentive*] So? What condition?

EPIFANIA I was to give him one hundred and fifty pounds, and tell him that if within six months he had turned that hundred and fifty pounds into fifty thousand, I was his If not, I was never to see him again I saw the wisdom of this Nobody but my father could have thought of such a real, infallible, unsentimental test I gave him my sacred promise that I would carry it out faithfully

SAGAMORE And you broke that promise I see

EPIFANIA What do you mean—broke that promise?

SAGAMORE Well, you married Alastair Now Alastair is a dear good fellow—one of the best in his way—but you are not going to persuade me that he made fifty thousand pounds in six months with a capital of one hundred and fifty.

EPIFANIA He did Wise as my father was, he sometimes forgot the wise things he said five minutes after he said them He warned me that ninety per cent of our selfmade millionaires are criminals who have taken a five hundred to one chance and got away with it by pure luck. Well, Alastair was that sort of criminal

SAGAMORE No no not a criminal That is not like Alastair A fool, perhaps, in business. But not a criminal

EPIFANIA Like all solicitors you think you know more about my husband than I do Well, I tell you that Alastair came back to me after six months probation with fifty thousand pounds in his pocket instead of the penal servitude he richly deserved. That man's luck is extraordinary He always wins He wins at tennis He wins at boxing He won me, the richest heiress in England.

SAGAMORE. But you were a consenting party If not, why did you put him to the test? Why did you give him the hundred and fifty to try his luck with?

EPIFANIA Boxing

SAGAMORE Boxing?

EPIFANIA. My father held that women should be able to defend themselves against male brutality He had me taught to box I became a boxing fan and went to all the championship fights I saw Alastair win the amateur heavy weight He has a solar plexus punch that nothing can withstand

SAGAMORE. And you married a man because he had a superlative solar plexus punch!

EPIFANIA Well, he was handsome. He stripped well, unlike many handsome men. I am not insusceptible to sex appeal, very far from it.

SAGAMORE [*hastily*] Oh quite, quite you need not go into details

EPIFANIA. I will if I like It is your business as a solicitor to know the details I made a very common mistake. I thought that this irresistible athlete would be an ardent lover. He was nothing of the kind All his ardor was in his fists Never shall I forget the day—it was during our honeymoon—when his coldness infuriated me to such a degree that I went for him with my fists He knocked me out with that abominable punch in the first exchange Have you ever been knocked out by a punch in the solar plexus?

SAGAMORE No, thank heaven I am not a pugilist

EPIFANIA It does not put you to sleep like a punch on the jaw. When he saw my face distorted with agony and my body writhing on the floor, he was horrified He said he did it automatically—that he always countered that way, by instinct But that does not prevent him from threatening to do it again whenever I lose my temper

SAGAMORE [*troubled*] I could not have believed it of Alastair.

EPIFANIA. Pooh! I asked for it It helps me to control my temper. It is one of his few redeeming points. For there he is effective he is in earnest he is doing the right thing. I almost respected him for it.

SAGAMORE But what is it all about then? Why do you want to get rid of him?

EPIFANIA I want to get rid of myself. I want to punish myself for making a mess of my life and marrying an imbecile. I, Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga, saw myself as the most wonderful woman in England marrying the most wonderful man. And I was only a goose marrying a buck rabbit What was there for me but death? And now you have put me off it with your fooling, and I don't know what I want That is a horrible state of mind I am a woman who must always want something and always get it

SAGAMORE An acquisitive woman Precisely How splendid! [*The telephone rings He rises*] Excuse me [*He goes to the table and listens*] Yes? . [*Hastily*] One moment. Hold the line [*To Epifania*] Your husband is downstairs, with a woman. They want to see me

EPIFANIA [*rising*] That woman! Have them up at once

SAGAMORE But can I depend on you to control yourself?

EPIFANIA You can depend on Alastair's fists I must have a look at Seedystockings Have them up, I tell you

SAGAMORE [*into the telephone*] Send Mr Fitzfassenden and the lady up

EPIFANIA. We shall see now the sort of woman for whom he has deserted ME!

SAGAMORE I am thrilled I expect something marvellous

EPIFANIA Dont be a fool Expect something utterly common

Alastair Fitzfassenden and Patricia Smith come in He is a splendid athlete, with most of his brains in his muscles She is a pleasant quiet little woman of the self-supporting type She makes placidly for the table, leaving Alastair to deal with his wife

ALASTAIR Eppy! What are you doing here? [*To Sagamore*] Why didnt you tell me?

EPIFANIA Introduce the female.

PATRICIA Patricia Smith is my name, Mrs Fitzfassenden.

EPIFANIA That is not how you sign your letters, I think

ALASTAIR Look here, Eppy Dont begin making a row—

EPIFANIA. I was not speaking to you I was speaking to the woman

ALASTAIR [*losing his temper*] You have no right to call her a woman.

PATRICIA. Now, now, Ally. you promised me—

EPIFANIA Promised you! What right had he to promise you? How dare he promise you? How dare you make him promise you?

ALASTAIR I wont have Polly insulted

SAGAMORE [*goodhumoredly*] You dont mind, Miss Smith, do you?

PATRICIA [*unconcerned*] Oh, I dont mind My sister goes on just like that

EPIFANIA. Your sister! You presume to compare your sister to me!

PATRICIA Only when she goes off at the deep end. You mustnt mind me theres nothing like letting yourself go if you are built that way. Introduce me to the gentleman, Ally

ALASTAIR Oh, I forgot Julius Sagamore, my solicitor. An old pal. Miss Smith

EPIFANIA. Alias Polly Seedystockings

PATRICIA. Thats only my pet name, Mr

THE COMPLETE PLAYS OF BERNARD SHAW

Sagamore Smith is the patronymic, as dear wise old father says
 EPIFANIA She sets up a wise father! This is the last straw

SAGAMORE Do sit down, Miss Smith, wont you? *[He goes to fetch a chair from the wall]*

PATRICIA *[contemplating the wrecked chair]* Hallo! Whats happened to the chair!

EPIFANIA I have happened to the chair Let it be a warning to you
 Sagamore places the chair for Patricia next the table Alastair shoves the broken chair back out of the way with his foot, fetches another from the wall, and is about to sit on it next Patricia when Epifania sits on it and motions him to her own chair, so that she is seated between the two, Patricia on her left, Alastair on her right Sagamore goes back to his official place at the table

PATRICIA You see, Mr Sagamore, it's like this Alastair—

EPIFANIA You need not explain I have explained everything to Mr Sagamore And you will please have the decency in his presence and in mine to speak of my husband as Mr Fitzfassenden His Christian name is no business of yours

ALASTAIR *[angry]* Of course, Eppy, if you wont let anybody speak—

EPIFANIA I am not preventing you nor anybody from speaking If you have anything to say for yourself, say it.

PATRICIA I am sorry But it's such a long name In my little circle everyone calls him just Ally

EPIFANIA *[her teeth on edge]* You hear this, Mr Sagamore! My husband is called "Ally" by these third rate people! What right have they to speak of him at all? Am I to endure this?

PATRICIA *[soothingly]* Yes we know you have to put up with a lot, deary,—

EPIFANIA *[stamping]* Deary!!!

PATRICIA *[continuing]*—but thats what the world is like

EPIFANIA The world is like that to people who are like that Your world is not my world Every woman has her own world within her own soul Listen to me, Mr Sagamore. I married this man I admitted him to my world, the world which my imagination had peopled with heroes and saints Never before had a real man been permitted to enter it I took him to be hero, saint, lover all in one What he really was you can see for yourself

ALASTAIR *[jumping up with his fists clenched and his face red]* I am damned if I stand this
 EPIFANIA *[rising and facing him in the pose of a martyr]* Yes strike me Shew her your knock-out punch Let her see how you treat women

ALASTAIR *[baffled]* Damn! *[He sits down again]*

PATRICIA Dont get rattled, Ally you will only put yourself in the wrong before Mr Sagamore I think youd better go home and leave me to have it out with her

EPIFANIA Will you have the goodness not to speak of me as "her"? I am Mrs Fitzfassenden I am not a pronoun *[She resumes her seat haughtily]*

PATRICIA Sorry, but your name is such a tongue-twister Mr Sagamore dont you think Ally had better go? It's not right that we should sit here arguing about him to his face Besides, he's worn out. he's hardly slept all night.

EPIFANIA How do you know that, pray?

PATRICIA Never mind how I know it I do
 ALASTAIR It was quite innocent, but where could I go to when you drove me out of the house by your tantrums?

EPIFANIA *[most unexpectedly amused]* You went to her?

ALASTAIR I went to Miss Smith she's not a pronoun, you know I went where I could find peace and kindness, to my good sweet darling Polly. So there!

EPIFANIA I have no sense of humor, but this strikes me as irresistibly funny You actually left ME to spend the night in the arms of Miss Seedystockings!

ALASTAIR. No, I tell you It was quite innocent

EPIFANIA *[to Patricia]* Was he in your arms or was he not?

PATRICIA Well, yes, of course he was for a while But not in the way you mean

EPIFANIA Then he is even a more sexless fish than I took him for But really a man capable of flouncing out of the house when I was on the point of pardoning him and giving him a night of legitimate bliss would be capable of any imbecility

ALASTAIR. Pardoning me! Pardoning me for what? What had I done when you flew out at me?

EPIFANIA I did not fly out at you I have never lost my dignity even under the most insufferable wrongs

ALASTAIR. You hadnt any wrongs You drove me out of the house—

EPIFANIA I did not. I never meant you to go. It was abominably selfish of you. You had your Seedystockings to go to; but I had nobody. Adrian was out of town.

SAGAMORE Adrian! This is a new complication. Who is Adrian?

PATRICIA Adrian is Mrs Fitzfassenden's Sunday husband, Mr Sagamore.

EPIFANIA. My what, did you say?

PATRICIA Your Sunday husband. You understand. What Mr Adrian Blenderbland is to you, as it were What Ally is to me.

SAGAMORE I dont quite follow What is Mr Blenderbland to you, Mrs Fitzfassenden, if I may ask?

EPIFANIA Well, he is a gentleman with whom I discuss subjects that are beyond my husband's mental grasp, which is extremely limited.

ALASTAIR. A chap that sets up to be an intellectual because his father was a publisher! He makes up to Eppy and pretends to be in love with her because she has a good cook, but I tell her he cares for nothing but his food. He always calls at mealtimes A belly-god, I call him And I am expected to put up with him But if I as much as look at Polly! Oh my!

EPIFANIA The cases are quite different. Adrian worships the ground I tread on: that is quite true But if you think that Seedy-stockings worships the ground you tread on, you flatter yourself grossly. She endures you and pets you because you buy stockings for her, and no doubt anything else she may be short of

PATRICIA. Well, I never contradict anyone, because it only makes trouble And I am afraid I do cost him a good deal, for he likes me to have nice things that I cant afford.

ALASTAIR [*affectionately*] No, Polly you dont Youre as good as gold. I'm always pressing things on you that you wont take Youre a jolly sight more careful of my money than I am myself.

EPIFANIA How touching! You are the Sunday wife, I suppose

PATRICIA No I should say that you are the Sunday wife, Mrs Fitzfassenden. It's I that have to look after his clothes and make him get his hair cut.

EPIFANIA Surely the creature is intelligent enough to do at least that much for himself

PATRICIA. You dont understand men they get interested in other things and neglect themselves unless they have a woman to look after them You see, Mr Sagamore, it's like this There are two sorts of people in the world the people anyone can live with and the people that no one can live with The people that no one can live with may be very goodlooking and vital and splendid and temperamental and romantic and all that; and they can make a man or woman happy for half an hour when they are pleased with themselves and disposed to be agreeable, but if you try to live with them they just eat up your whole life running after them or quarrelling or attending to them one way or another you cant call your soul your own As Sunday husbands and wives, just to have a good tearing bit of lovemaking with, or a blazing row, or mostly one on top of the other, once a month or so, theyre all right. But as everyday partners theyre just impossible

EPIFANIA So I am the Sunday wife [*To Patricia, scornfully*] And what are you, pray?

PATRICIA Well, I am the angel in the house, if you follow me.

ALASTAIR [*blubbing*] You are, dear. you are.

EPIFANIA [*to Patricia*] You are his doormat. thats what you are

PATRICIA. Doormats are very useful things if you want the house kept tidy, dear.

The telephone rings Sagamore attends to it

SAGAMORE Yes? . . . Did you say Blenderbland?

EPIFANIA. Adrian! How did he know I was here?

SAGAMORE. Ask the gentleman to wait [*He hangs up the receiver*] Perhaps you can tell me something about him, Mrs Fitzfassenden Is he the chairman of Blenderbland's Literary Pennyworths?

EPIFANIA. No That is his father, who created the business, Adrian is on the board; but he has no business ability He is on fifteen boards of directors on the strength of his father's reputation, and has never, as far as I know, contributed an idea to any of them.

ALASTAIR Be fair to him, Eppy. No man in London knows how to order a dinner better. Thats what keeps him at the top in the city.

SAGAMORE. Thank you I think I have his measure sufficiently. Shall I have him up?

EPIFANIA Certainly I want to know what he is doing here

ALASTAIR. I dont mind. You understand, of course, that I am not supposed to know anything of his relations with my wife, whatever they may be

EPIFANIA. They are perfectly innocent, so far I am not quite convinced that I love Adrian He makes himself agreeable that is all

SAGAMORE [*into the telephone*] Send Mr Blenderbland up [*He hangs up the instrument*]

ALASTAIR [*to Patricia*] You will now see the blighter who has cut me out with Eppy

PATRICIA I cant imagine any man cutting you out with any woman, dear

EPIFANIA Will you be good enough to restrain your endearments when he comes in?

Adrian Blenderbland, an imposing man in the prime of life, bearded in the Victorian literary fashion, rather handsome, and well dressed, comes in Sagamore rises Adrian is startled when he sees the company, but recovers his aplomb at once, and advances smiling

ADRIAN Hallo! Where have we all come from? Good morning, Mrs Fitzfassenden How do, Alastair? Mr Sagamore, I presume I did not know you were engaged

SAGAMORE Your arrival is quite opportune, sir Will you have the goodness to sit down? [*He takes a chair from the wall and places it at the table, on his own right and Patricia's left*]

ADRIAN [*sitting down*] Thank you I hope I am not interrupting this lady

PATRICIA Not at all Dont mind me

SAGAMORE [*introducing*] Miss Smith, an intimate friend of Mr Fitzfassenden.

PATRICIA Pleased to meet you, I'm sure

Adrian bows to her, then turns to Sagamore

ADRIAN The fact is, Mrs Fitzfassenden mentioned your name to me in conversation as her choice of a new solicitor So I thought I could not place myself in better hands

SAGAMORE [*bowing*] Thank you, sir But—excuse me—had you not a solicitor of your own?

ADRIAN My dear Mr Sagamore never be content with a single opinion When I feel ill I always consult at least half a dozen doctors The variety of their advice and prescriptions convinces me that I had better cure myself When a legal point arises I consult six solicitors, with much the same—

EPIFANIA Adrian I have no sense of humor, and you know how it annoys me when you

talk the sort of nonsense that is supposed to be funny Did you come here to consult Mr Sagamore about me?

ADRIAN I did But of course I expected to find him alone

PATRICIA And here we are, the whole caboodle

EPIFANIA I was speaking to Mr Blenderbland, not to you And I am not a member of your caboodle, as you call it

PATRICIA Sorry, dear It was only a reminder that I was listening

SAGAMORE Has the matter on which you wish to consult me any reference to Mr Fitzfassenden's family circle?

ADRIAN It has

SAGAMORE Is it of such a nature that sooner or later it will have to be discussed with all the adult members of that circle?

ADRIAN Well, yes I suppose so But hadnt we better talk it over a little in private first?

EPIFANIA You shall do nothing of the sort I will not have my affairs discussed by anybody in public or in private They concern myself alone

ADRIAN May I not discuss my own affairs?

EPIFANIA Not with my solicitor I will not have it

ALASTAIR Now she is off at the deep end again We may as well go home

EPIFANIA [*restlessly rising*] Oh, the deep end! the deep end! What is life if it is not lived at the deep end? Alastair you are a tadpole [*She seizes his head and ruffles his hair as she passes him*]

ALASTAIR Dont do that [*He tries to smooth his hair*]

EPIFANIA [*to Patricia*] Smooth it for him, angel in the house

PATRICIA [*moving to Epifania's chair and doing so*] You shouldnt make a sight of him like that

SAGAMORE Mr Fitzfassenden why did you marry Mrs Fitzfassenden?

EPIFANIA Why!!! Does that require any explanation? I have told you why I married him

ALASTAIR Well, though you mightnt think it, she can be frightfully fascinating when she really wants to be

EPIFANIA Why might he not think it? What do you mean?

ALASTAIR. He knows what I mean

EPIFANIA Some silly joke, I suppose

ADRIAN Dont be absurd, Fitzfassenden

Your wife is the most adorable woman on earth.

EPIFANIA Not here, Adrian If you are going to talk like that, take me away to some place where we can be alone

ALASTAIR Do, for heaven's sake, before she drives us all crazy

SAGAMORE Steady! steady! I hardly know where I am You are all consulting me, but none of you has given me any instructions Had you not better all be divorced?

EPIFANIA What is the creature to live on? He has nothing he would have had to become a professional boxer or tennis player if his uncle had not pushed him into an insurance office, where he was perfectly useless.

ALASTAIR Look here, Eppy. Sagamore doesn't want to hear all this.

EPIFANIA He does He shall. Be silent When Alastair proposed to me—he was too great an idiot to comprehend his own audacity—I kept my promise to my father I handed him a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds. "Make that into fifty thousand within six months" I said "and I am yours"

ADRIAN You never told me this

EPIFANIA. Why should I? It is a revolting story

ALASTAIR. What is there revolting about it? Did I make good or did I not? Did I go through hell to get that money and win you or did I not?

ADRIAN [amazed] Do I understand you to say, Alastair, that you made fifty thousand pounds in six months?

ALASTAIR Why not?

EPIFANIA You may well look incredulous, Adrian But he did. Yes this imbecile made fifty thousand pounds and won Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga for his bride. You will not believe me when I tell you that the possession of all that money, and the consciousness of having made it himself, gave him a sort of greatness I am impulsive I kept my word and married him instantly Then, too late, I found out how he had made it

ALASTAIR Well, how did I make it? By my own brains

EPIFANIA Brains! By your own folly, your ignorance, your criminal instincts, and the luck that attends the half-witted You won my hand, for which all Europe was on its knees to me. What you deserved was five years penal servitude

ALASTAIR. Five years! Fifteen, more likely.

That was what I risked for you And what did I get by it? Life with you was worse than any penal servitude

EPIFANIA It would have been heaven to you if Nature had fitted you for such a companionship as mine But what was it for me? No man had been good enough for me. I was like a princess in a fairy tale offering all men alive my hand and fortune if they could turn my hundred and fifty pound cheque into fifty thousand within six months Able men, brilliant men, younger sons of the noblest families either refused the test or failed. Why? Because they were too honest or too proud This thing succeeded, and I found myself tied for life to an insect.

ALASTAIR You may say what you like, but you were just as much in love with me as I was with you.

EPIFANIA Well, you were young; you were well shaped, your lawn tennis was outstanding; you were a magnificent boxer, and I was excited by physical contact with you

SAGAMORE. Is it necessary to be so very explicit, Mrs Fitzfassenden?

EPIFANIA. Julius Sagamore you may be made of sawdust; but I am made of flesh and blood. Alastair is physically attractive that is my sole excuse for having married him. Will you have the face to pretend that he has any mental charm?

ADRIAN But how did he make the fifty thousand pounds? Was it on the Stock Exchange?

EPIFANIA Nonsense! the creature does not know the difference between a cumulative preference and a deferred ordinary He would not know even how to begin

ADRIAN But how did he begin? My bank balance at present is somewhere about a hundred and fifty I should very much like to know how to make it up to fifty thousand You are so rich, Epifania, that every decent man who approaches you feels like a needy adventurer You don't know how a man to whom a hundred pounds is a considerable sum feels in the arms of a woman to whom a million is mere pin money

EPIFANIA Nor do you know what it feels like to be in the arms of a man and know that you could buy him up twenty times over and never miss the price

ADRIAN. If I give you my hundred and fifty pounds, will you invest it for me?

EPIFANIA It is not worth investing You

cannot make money on the Stock Exchange until your weekly account is at least seventy thousand Do not meddle with money, Adrian you do not understand it I will give you all you need

ADRIAN No, thank you I should lose my self-respect I prefer the poor man's luxury of paying for your cabs and flowers and theatre tickets and lunches at the Ritz, and lending you all the little sums you have occasion for when we are together

The rest all stare at this light on Epifania's habits

EPIFANIA It is quite true I never have any pocket money I must owe you millions in odd five pound notes I will tell my bankers that you want a thousand on account

ADRIAN But I don't I love lending you fivers Only, as they run through my comparatively slender resources at an appalling rate, I should honestly like a few lessons from Alastair in the art of turning hundreds into tens of thousands

EPIFANIA His example would be useless to you, Adrian, because Alastair is one of Nature's marvels, and there is nothing marvelous about you except your appetite Listen. On each of his birthdays his aunt had presented him with a gramophone record of the singing of the celebrated tenor Enrico Caruso Now it so happens that Nature, in one of her most unaccountable caprices, has endowed Alastair with a startlingly loud singing voice of almost supernatural range He can sing high notes never before attained by mortal man He found that he could imitate gramophone records with the greatest facility, and he became convinced that he could make a fortune as an operatic tenor The first use he made of my money was to give fifty pounds to the manager of some trumpery little opera company which was then on its last legs in the suburbs to allow him to appear for one night in one of Caruso's most popular roles He actually took me to hear his performance

ALASTAIR It wasn't my fault I can sing Caruso's head off It was a plot The regular tenor of the company a swine that could hardly reach B flat without breaking his neck, paid a lot of blackguards to go into the gallery and boo me

EPIFANIA My dear Alastair, the simple truth is that Nature, when she endowed you with your amazing voice, unfortunately omitted to provide you with a musical ear

You can bellow loudly enough to drown ten thousand bulls, but you are always at least a quarter tone sharp or flat as the case may be I laughed until I fell on the floor of my box in screaming hysterics The audience hooted and booed, but they could not make themselves heard above your roaring At last the chorus dragged you off the stage, and the regular tenor finished the performance only to find that the manager had absconded with my fifty pounds and left the whole company penniless The prima donna was deaf in the left ear, into which you had sung with all your force I had to pay all their salaries and send them home

ALASTAIR I tell you it was a plot Why shouldn't people like my singing? I can sing louder than any tenor on the stage I can sing higher

EPIFANIA. Alastair you cannot resist a plot when the whole world is a party to it

ADRIAN Still, this does not explain how Alastair made the fifty thousand pounds

EPIFANIA I leave him to tell that disgraceful tale himself I believe he is proud of it [*She sits down disdainfully in the vacant chair*]

ALASTAIR Well, it worked out all right But it was a near thing, I tell you What I did was this I had a hundred pounds left after the opera stunt I met an American. I told him I was crazy about a woman who wouldn't marry me unless I made fifty thousand in six months, and that I had only a hundred pounds in the world. He jumped up and said "Why, man alive, if you have a hundred you can open a bank account and get a cheque book" I said "What good is a cheque book?" He said "Are we partners, fifty fifty?" So I said yes what else could I say? That very day we started in. We lodged the money and got a book of a hundred cheques We took a theatre We engaged a first rate cast We got a play We got a splendid production the scenery was lovely the girls were lovely the principal woman was an angry-eyed creature with a queer foreign voice and a Hollywood accent, just the sort the public loves We never asked the price of anything; we just went in up to our necks for thousands and thousands

ADRIAN But how did you pay for all these things?

ALASTAIR With our cheques, of course Didn't I tell you we had a cheque book?

ADRIAN. But when the hundred was gone

the cheques must have been dishonored.

ALASTAIR Not one of them We kited them all But it was a heartbreaking job

ADRIAN. I dont understand What does kiting mean?

SAGAMORE. It is quite simple You pay for something with a cheque after the banks have closed for the day if on Saturday or just before a bank holiday all the better Say the cheque is for a hundred pounds and you have not a penny at the bank. You must then induce a friend or a hotel manager to cash another cheque for one hundred pounds for you That provides for the previous cheque, but it obliges you, on pain of eighteen months hard labour, to induce another friend or hotel manager to cash another cheque for you for two hundred pounds And so you go on spending and kiting from hundreds to thousands and from risks of eighteen months imprisonment to five years, ten years, fourteen years even.

ALASTAIR If you think that was an easy job, just try it yourself thats all I dream of it sometimes its my worst nightmare Why, my partner and I never saw that theatre! never saw the play! until the first night we were signing cheques and kiting them all the time Of course it was easier after a while, because as we paid our way all right we found it easier to get credit, and the biggest expenses didnt come until after the play was produced and the money was coming in I could have done it for half the money; but the American could only keep himself up to the excitement of it by paying twice as much as we needed for everything and shoving shares in it on people for nothing but talk. But it didnt matter when the money began to come in My! how it did come in! The whole town went mad about the angry-eyed woman. It rained money in bucketsful It went to my head like drink It went to the American's head It went to the head of the American's American friends They bought all the rights the film rights, the translation rights, the touring rights, all sorts of rights that I never knew existed, and began selling them to one another until everybody in London and New York and Hollywood had a rake-off on them. Then the American bought all the rights back for five hundred thousand dollars, and sold them to an American syndicate for a million It took six more Americans to do it, and every one of them had to have a

rake-off; but all I wanted was fifty thousand pounds, and I cleared out with that and came swanking back to claim Eppy's hand. She thought I was great I was great the money made me great I tell you I was drunk with it I was another man You may believe it or not as you like, but my hats were really too small for me

EPIFANIA It is quite true. The creature was not used to money; and it transfigured him I, poor innocent, had no suspicion that money could work such miracles; for I had possessed millions in my cradle, and it meant no more to me than the air I breathed.

SAGAMORE But just now, when I suggested a divorce, you asked how he was to live What has become of the fifty thousand pounds?

EPIFANIA He lost it all in three weeks. He bought a circus with it He thought everything he touched would turn into gold I had to liquidate that circus a month later. He was about to turn the wild beasts loose and run away when I intervened I was down four hundred and thirty pounds sixteen and sevenpence by the transaction

ALASTAIR Was it my fault? The elephant got influenza The Ministry of Health closed me down and wouldnt let me move on because the animals might carry foot-and-mouth disease

EPIFANIA At all events, the net result was that instead of his being fifty thousand pounds to the good I was four hundred and thirty pounds to the bad Instead of bringing me the revenues of a prince and a hero he cost me the allowance of a worm And now he has the audacity to ask for a divorce.

ALASTAIR No I dont It was Sagamore who suggested that How can I afford to let you divorce me? As your husband I enjoy a good deal of social consideration; and the tradesmen give me unlimited credit

EPIFANIA For stockings, among other things.

PATRICIA Oh [*she weeps*]! Does she pay for them, Ally?

ALASTAIR Never mind, dear I have shewn that I can make money when I am put to it; and I will make it again and buy you all the stockings you need out of my own earnings [*He rises and goes behind her chair to take her cheeks in his hands*] There, darling dont cry

EPIFANIA There! They think they are married already!

SAGAMORE But the matter is not in your

hands, Mr Fitzfassenden Mrs Fitzfassenden can divorce you whether you like it or not The evidence is that on a recent occasion you left your wife and took refuge in the arms of Miss Smith The Court will give Mrs Fitzfassenden a decree on that

PATRICIA [*consoled and plucky*] Well, let it I can support Alastair until he has time to make another fortune You all think him a fool, but he's a dear good boy, and it just disgusts me the way you all turn against him, and the way his wife treats him as if he were dirt under her feet What would she be without her money, I'd like to know?

EPIFANIA Nobody is anybody without money, Seedystockings My dear old father taught me that "Stick to your money" he said "and all the other things shall be added unto you" He said it was in the Bible I have never verified the quotation, but I have never forgotten it I have stuck to my money, and I shall continue to stick to it. Rich as I am, I can hardly forgive Alastair for letting me down by four hundred and thirty pounds

ALASTAIR Sixteen and sevenpence! Stingy beast But I will pay it

PATRICIA. You shall, dear I will sell out my insurance and give it to you

EPIFANIA May I have that in writing, Miss Smith?

ALASTAIR Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you greedy pig It was your own fault. Why did you let the elephant go for thirty pounds? He cost two hundred.

SAGAMORE Do not let us wander from the point

EPIFANIA What is the point, pray?

SAGAMORE The point is that you can obtain a divorce if you wish

EPIFANIA I don't wish Do you think I am going to be dragged through the divorce court and have my picture in the papers with that thing? To have the story of my infatuation told in headlines in every rag in London! Besides, it is convenient to be married. It is respectable It keeps other men off It gives me a freedom that I could not enjoy as a single woman I have become accustomed to a husband No decidedly I will not divorce Alastair—at least until I can find a substitute whom I really want

PATRICIA You couldn't divorce him unless he chose to let you Alastair's too much the gentleman to mention it, but you know very well that your own behavior hasn't been so

very nunlike that you dare have it shewn up in court

EPIFANIA Alastair was the first man I ever loved, and I hope he will not be the last But legal difficulties do not exist for people with money At all events, as Alastair cannot afford to divorce me, and I have no intention of divorcing him, the question does not arise What o'clock is it?

ALASTAIR I really think, Eppy, you might buy a wrist watch I have told you so over and over again

EPIFANIA Why should I go to the expense of buying a wrist watch when everyone else has one, and I have nothing to do but ask? I have not carried a watch since I lost the key of my father's old repeater

PATRICIA It is ten minutes past twelve

EPIFANIA Gracious! I have missed my lesson How annoying!

ALASTAIR Your lesson? What are you learning now, may I ask?

EPIFANIA. All-in wrestling When you next indulge in your favorite sport of wife beating, look out for a surprise What did I come here for, Mr Sagamore?

SAGAMORE. To give me instructions about your will

ALASTAIR. She makes a new will every time she loses her temper, Sagamore Jolly good business for you

EPIFANIA Do be quiet, Alastair You forget the dignity of your position as my husband. Mr Sagamore I have changed my mind about my will And I shall overlook your attempt to poison me

SAGAMORE Thank you

EPIFANIA. What do I owe you for this abortive consultation?

SAGAMORE Thirteen and fourpence, if you please

EPIFANIA I do not carry money about with me Adrian can you lend me thirteen and fourpence?

ADRIAN [*puts his hand in his pocket*]—

EPIFANIA Stop Mr Sagamore you had better be my family solicitor and send me your bill at the end of the year

ALASTAIR Send a County Court summons with it, Sagamore, or you may go whistle for your money

EPIFANIA Do hold your tongue, Alastair Of course I always wait for a summons It is a simple precaution against paying bills sent in twice over

SAGAMORE Quite, Mrs Fitzfassenden. An excellent rule

EPIFANIA You are a man of sense, Mr Sagamore And now I must have some fresh air this orgy of domesticity has made the room stuffy Come along, Adrian, we'll drive out into the country somewhere, and lunch there I know the quaintest little place up the river Goodbye, Mr Sagamore. Goodbye, Seedy take care of Alastair for me His good looks will give you a pleasing sensation down your spine. [*She goes out*]

SAGAMORE [*as Adrian is following her out*] By the way, Mr Blenderbland, what did you come for?

ADRIAN I totally forget I dont feel equal to any more this morning [*He goes out without further salutations*]

SAGAMORE [*to Alastair*] Your wife is a most extraordinary lady

ALASTAIR [*utters a stifled howl*]

PATRICIA He cant find words for her, poor dear.

SAGAMORE. And now, Mr Fitzfassenden, may I ask what you came to consult me about?

ALASTAIR I dont know After ten minutes of Eppy I never do know whether I am standing on my head or my heels

PATRICIA It was about a separation. Pull yourself together a bit, dear

ALASTAIR Separation! You might as well try to separate yourself from a hurricane [*He becomes sententious*]. Listen to me, Sagamore I am one of those unfortunate people—you must know a lot of them—I daresay many of them have sat in this chair and talked to you as I am now talking to you—

SAGAMORE [*after waiting in vain for a completion of the sentence*] Yes? You were saying—?

PATRICIA Dont wander, Ally Tell Mr Sagamore what sort of people

ALASTAIR The people that have bitten off more than they can chew. The ordinary chaps that have married extraordinary women The commonplace women that have married extraordinary men They all thought it was a splendid catch for them Take my advice, Sagamore marry in your own class Dont misunderstand me I dont mean rank or money What I mean—what I mean—

PATRICIA [*coming to the rescue*] What he means is that people who marry should think about the same things and like the same

things They shouldnt be over oneanother's heads, if you follow me

SAGAMORE Perfectly May I take it that Alastair made that mistake, and that later on (too late, unfortunately) he discovered in you a—shall I say a soul mate?

ALASTAIR. No. that sounds silly. Literary, you know

PATRICIA. More of a mind mate, I should call it.

SAGAMORE Precisely Thank you A mind mate with whom he could be thoroughly comfortable.

ALASTAIR [*grasping Sagamore's hand fervently*] Thank you, Sagamore you are a real friend Youve got it exactly Think over it for us Come on, Seedy darling: we mustnt waste a busy man's time

He goes out, leaving Patricia and Sagamore alone together. She rises and goes to the table

PATRICIA Mr Sagamore youll stand by us, wont you? Youll save Ally from that awful woman Youll save him for me.

SAGAMORE I'm afraid I cant control her, Miss Smith Whats worse, I'm afraid she can control me It's not only that I cant afford to offend so rich a client It's that her will paralyzes mine It's a sort of genius some people have.

PATRICIA. Dont you be afraid of her, Mr Sagamore She has a genius for making money. It's in her family Money comes to her. But I have my little bit of genius too, and she cant paralyze me.

SAGAMORE And what have you a genius for, Miss Smith, if I may ask?

PATRICIA For making people happy. Unhappy people come to me just as money comes to her

SAGAMORE [*shaking his head*] I cant think that your will is stronger than hers, Miss Smith

PATRICIA. It isnt, Mr Sagamore I have no will at all But I get what I want, somehow. Youll see

ALASTAIR [*outside, shouting*] Seedy! Come on!

PATRICIA. Coming, darling [*To Sagamore*] Goodbye, Mr Sagamore [*they shake hands quickly She hurries to the door*] Youll see. [*She goes out*]

SAGAMORE [*to himself*] I think I shall wait and see.

He resumes his morning's work.

ACT II

A dismal old coffee room in an ancient riverside inn. An immense and hideous sideboard of the murkiest mahogany stretches across the end wall. Above it hang, picturewise, two signboards, nearly black with age, one shewing the arms of the lord of the manor, and the other a sow standing upright and playing a flageolet. Underneath the sow is inscribed in tall letters THE PIG & WHISTLE. Between these works of art is a glass case containing an enormous stuffed fish, certainly not less than a century old.

At right angles to the sideboard, and extending nearly the whole length of the room, are two separate long tables, laid for lunch for about a dozen people each. The chairs, too close together, are plain wooden ones, hard and uncomfortable. The cutlery is cheap kitchen ware, with rickety silver cruets and salt cellars to keep up appearances. The table cloths are coarse, and are not fresh from the laundry.

The walls are covered with an ugly Victorian paper which may have begun as a design of dull purple wreaths on a dark yellow background, but is now a flyblown muck of no describable color, but crushingly depressing. There is no carpet. The door, which stands wide open and has COFFEE ROOM inscribed on it, is to the right of anyone contemplating the sideboard from the opposite end of the room. Next the door an old fashioned hatstand flattens itself against the wall, and on it hangs the hat and light overcoat of Mr Adrian Blenderbland.

He, with Epifania, is seated at the end of the table farthest from the door. They have just finished a meal. The cheese and biscuits are still on the table. She looks interested and happy. He is in the worst of tempers.

EPIFANIA How jolly!

ADRIAN [looking round disparagingly] I must be a very attractive man.

EPIFANIA [opening her eyes wide] Indeed! Not that I am denying it; but what has it to do with what I have just said?

ADRIAN You said "How jolly!" I look round at this rotten old inn trying to pretend that it's a riverside hotel. We have just had a horrible meal of tomato tea called soup, the remains of Sunday's joint, sprouts, potatoes, apple tart and stale American synthetic cheese. If you can suffer this and say "How jolly!" there must be some irresistible attraction present, and I can see nothing that is not utterly repulsive except myself.

EPIFANIA Dont you like these dear old-

world places? I do.

ADRIAN I dont. They ought all to be rooted up, pulled down, burnt to the ground. Your flat on the Embankment in London cost more to furnish than this place did to build from the cellar to the roof. You can get a decent lunch there, perfectly served, by a word through the telephone. Your luxurious car will whisk you out to one of a dozen first rate hotels in lovely scenery. And yet you choose this filthy old inn and say "How jolly!" What is the use of being a millionairess on such terms?

EPIFANIA Psha! When I was first let loose on the world with unlimited money, how long do you think it took me to get tired of shopping and sick of the luxuries you think so much of? About a fortnight. My father, when he had a hundred millions, travelled third class and never spent more than ten shillings a day on himself except when he was entertaining people who were useful to him. Why should he? He couldnt eat more than anyone else. He couldnt drink more than anyone else. He couldnt wear more than anyone else. Neither can I.

ADRIAN Then why do you love money and hate spending it?

EPIFANIA Because money is power. Money is security. Money is freedom. It's the difference between living on the slope of a volcano and being safe in the garden of the Hesperides. And there is the continual pleasure of making more of it, which is quite easy if you have plenty to start with. I can turn a million into two million much more easily than a poor woman can turn five pounds into ten, even if she could get the five pounds to begin with. It turns itself, in fact.

ADRIAN To me money is a vulgar bore and a soul destroying worry. I need it, of course, but I dont like it. I never think of it when I can possibly help it.

EPIFANIA If you dont think about money what do you think about? Women?

ADRIAN Yes, of course, but not exclusively.

EPIFANIA Food?

ADRIAN Well, I am not always thinking about my food, but I am rather particular about it. I confess I looked forward to a better lunch than [indicating the table] that.

EPIFANIA. Oh! So that is what has put you out of temper, is it?

ADRIAN [annoyed] I am not out of temper, I hope. But you promised me a very special

treat You said you had found out the most wonderful place on the river, where we could be ourselves and have a delicious cottage meal in primitive happiness Where is the charm of this dismal hole? Have you ever eaten a viler lunch? There is not even a private sitting room. anybody can walk in here at any moment. We should have been much more comfortable at Richmond or Maidenhead And I believe it is raining.

EPIFANIA Is that my fault?

ADRIAN It completes your notion of a happy day up the river Why is it that the people who know how to enjoy themselves never have any money, and the people who have money never know how to enjoy themselves?

EPIFANIA You are not making yourself agreeable, Adrian

ADRIAN. You are not entertaining me very munificently, Epifania For heaven's sake let us get into the car and drive about the country It is much more luxurious than this hideous coffee room, and more private.

EPIFANIA I am tired of my car.

ADRIAN I am not. I wish I could afford one like it.

EPIFANIA I thought you would enjoy sitting in this crazy out-of-way place talking to me But I find you are a spoilt old bachelor you care about nothing but your food and your little comforts. You are worse than Alastair, for he at least could talk about boxing and tennis

ADRIAN And you can talk about nothing but money.

EPIFANIA And you think money uninteresting! Oh, you should have known my father!

ADRIAN. I am very glad I did not

EPIFANIA [*suddenly dangerous*] Whats that you say?

ADRIAN My dear Epifania, if we are to remain friends, I may as well be quite frank with you Everything you have told me about your father convinces me that though he was no doubt an affectionate parent and amiable enough to explain your rather tiresome father fixation, as Dr Freud would call it, he must have been quite the most appalling bore that ever devastated even a Rotary club

EPIFANIA My father! You dare think such things of my father! You infinite nothingness! My father made a hundred and fifty millions. You never made even half a million.

ADRIAN. My good girl, your father never

made anything I have not the slightest notion of how he contrived to get a legal claim on so much of what other people made, but I do know that he lost four fifths of it by being far enough behind the times to buy up the properties of the Russian nobility in the belief that England would squash the Soviet revolution in three weeks or so Could anyone have made a stupider mistake? Not I, fool as you think me. In short, Epifania, the world would not have been a penny the poorer if your father had never existed. You see that, dont you?

EPIFANIA [*springing up and squaring at him*] I see red. Stand up, you cur. Put up your hands Put them up

ADRIAN [*rising in some consternation, but not fully recognizing his peril*] Epifania: it's no use losing your temper—

EPIFANIA [*delivering a straight left to his chin*] Take that for calling my father a bore. [*Following it up with a savage punch with her right*] Take that for saying he never made anything

ADRIAN [*writhing on the floor*] Help! Police! Murder! [*He is unable to rise, but he rolls and scrambles to the door gasping piteously*]

EPIFANIA [*sending him through the door with a mule kick*] Rotter! Bounder! Stinker! [*She snatches his hat and coat from the stand and throws them after him whilst he is heard falling downstairs*]

ADRIAN [*piteously*] Help! Help!

EPIFANIA You brute! You have killed me. [*She totters to the nearest chair and sinks into it, scattering the crockery as she clutches the table with her outstretched arms and sprawls on it in convulsions*].

A serious looking middleaged Egyptian gentleman in an old black frock coat and a tarboosh, speaking English too well to be mistaken for a native, hurries in

THE EGYPTIAN [*peremptorily*] Whats the matter? What is going on here?

EPIFANIA [*raising her head slowly and gazing at him*] Who the devil are you?

THE EGYPTIAN. I am an Egyptian doctor I hear a great disturbance I hasten to ascertain the cause I find you here in convulsions Can I help?

EPIFANIA I am dying

THE DOCTOR Nonsense! You can swear. The fit has subsided. You can sit up now you are quite well Good afternoon

EPIFANIA Stop I am not quite well. I am

on the point of death. I need a doctor I am a rich woman.

THE DOCTOR In that case you will have no difficulty in finding an English doctor Is there anyone else who needs my help? I was upstairs The noise was of somebody falling downstairs He may have broken some bones [*He goes out promptly*]

EPIFANIA [*struggling to her feet and calling after him*] Never mind him if he has broken every bone in his body it is no more than he deserves Come back instantly I want you Come back. Come back.

THE DOCTOR [*returning*] The landlord is taking the gentleman to the Cottage Hospital in your car

EPIFANIA In my car! I will not permit it Let them get an ambulance

THE DOCTOR. The car has gone You should be very glad that it is being so useful

EPIFANIA It is your business to doctor me, not to lecture me

THE DOCTOR I am not your doctor I am not in general practice I keep a clinic for penniless Mahometan refugees, and I work in the hospital I cannot attend to you

EPIFANIA. You can attend to me You must attend to me Are you going to leave me here to die?

THE DOCTOR You are not dying Not yet, at least. Your own doctor will attend to you

EPIFANIA You are my own doctor I tell you I am a rich woman doctors' fees are nothing to me charge me what you please But you must and shall attend to me You are abominably rude, but you inspire confidence as a doctor

THE DOCTOR If I attended all those in whom I inspire confidence I should be worn out in a week. I have to reserve myself for poor and useful people

EPIFANIA Then you are either a fool or a Bolshevik.

THE DOCTOR. I am nothing but a servant of Allah

EPIFANIA You are not you are my doctor do you hear? I am a sick woman you cannot abandon me to die in this wretched place

THE DOCTOR I see no symptoms of any sickness about you Are you in pain?

EPIFANIA Yes Horrible pain.

THE DOCTOR Where?

EPIFANIA. Don't cross-examine me as if you didn't believe me I must have sprained my knuckles and my wrist on that beast's chin.

THE DOCTOR Which hand?

EPIFANIA [*presenting her left*] This, of course

THE DOCTOR [*taking her hand in a businesslike way, and pulling and turning the fingers and wrist*] Nothing whatever the matter

EPIFANIA How do you know? It's my hand, not yours

THE DOCTOR You would scream the house down if your wrist were sprained You are shamming—lying Why? Is it to make yourself interesting?

EPIFANIA Make myself interesting! Man I am interesting

THE DOCTOR Not in the least, medically Are you interesting in any other way?

EPIFANIA I am the most interesting woman in England I am Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga

THE DOCTOR. Never heard of her Italian aristocrat, I presume

EPIFANIA. Aristocrat! Do you take me for a fool? My ancestors were moneylenders to all Europe five hundred years ago we are now bankers to all the world

THE DOCTOR Jewess, eh?

EPIFANIA Christian, to the last drop of my blood Jews throw half their money away on charities and fancies like Zionism The stupidest di Parerga can just walk round the cleverest Jew when it comes to money-making We are the only real aristocracy in the world the aristocracy of money.

THE DOCTOR The plutocracy, in fact

EPIFANIA If you like I am a plutocrat of the plutocrats

THE DOCTOR Well, that is a disease for which I do not prescribe The only known cure is a revolution, but the mortality rate is high, and sometimes, if it is the wrong sort of revolution, it intensifies the disease I can do nothing for you I must go back to my work Good morning

EPIFANIA [*holding him*] But this is your work. What else have you to do?

THE DOCTOR There is a good deal to be done in the world besides attending rich imaginary invalids

EPIFANIA But if you are well paid?

THE DOCTOR I make the little money I need by work which I venture to think more important

EPIFANIA [*throwing him away and moving about distractedly*] You are a pig and a beast and a Bolshevik. It is the most abominable thing of you to leave me here in my distress.

My car is gone I have no money. I never carry money about

THE DOCTOR I have none to carry Your car will return presently You can borrow money from your chauffeur.

EPIFANIA. You are an unmitigated hippopotamus. You are a Bashibazouk. I might have known it from your ridiculous tarboosh You should take it off in my presence [*She snatches it from his head and holds it behind her back*] At least have the manners to stay with me until my chauffeur comes back.

The motor horn is heard honking.

THE DOCTOR He has come back.

EPIFANIA Damn! Cant you wait until he has had his tea and a cigarette?

THE DOCTOR No Be good enough to give me back my fez.

EPIFANIA I wanted to see what you looked like without it [*She puts it tenderly on his head*]. Listen to me. You are having an adventure. Have you no romance in you? Havnt you even common curiosity? Dont you want to know why I threw that beast downstairs? Dont you want to throw your wretched work to the devil for once and have an afternoon on the river with an interesting and attractive woman?

THE DOCTOR Women are neither interesting nor attractive to me except when they are ill I know too much about them, inside and out You are perfectly well.

EPIFANIA Lial Nobody is perfectly well, nor ever has been, nor ever will be. [*She sits down, sulking*]

THE DOCTOR. That is true. You must have brains of a sort. [*He sits down opposite to her*] I remember when I began as a young surgeon I killed several patients by my operations because I had been taught that I must go on cutting until there was nothing left but perfectly healthy tissue. As there is no such thing as perfectly healthy tissue I should have cut my patients entirely away if the nurse had not stopped me before they died on the table. They died after they left the hospital, but as they were carried away from the table alive I was able to claim a successful operation Are you married?

EPIFANIA Yes But you need not be afraid My husband is openly unfaithful to me and cannot take you into court if you make love to me I can divorce him if necessary.

THE DOCTOR. And the man you threw downstairs who was he? One does not throw one's

husband downstairs. Did he make love to you?

EPIFANIA. No He insulted my father's memory because he was disappointed with his lunch here When I think of my father all ordinary men seem to me the merest trash. You are not an ordinary man I should like to see some more of you Now that you have asked me confidential questions about my family, and I have answered them, you can no longer pretend that you are not my family doctor So that is settled

THE DOCTOR A father fixation, did you say?

EPIFANIA [*nods*]

THE DOCTOR And an excess of money?

EPIFANIA. Only a beggarly thirty millions

THE DOCTOR A psychological curiosity I will consider it

EPIFANIA. Consider it! You will feel honored, gratified, delighted

THE DOCTOR I see Enormous self-confidence Reckless audacity. Insane egotism. Apparently sexless

EPIFANIA Sexless! Who told you that I am sexless?

THE DOCTOR. You talk to me as if you were a man. There is no mystery, no separateness, no sacredness about men to you A man to you is only a male of your species.

EPIFANIA My species indeed! Men are a different and very inferior species. Five minutes conversation with my husband will convince you that he and I do not belong to the same species But there are some great men, like my father And there are some good doctors, like you.

THE DOCTOR Thank you What does your regular doctor say about you?

EPIFANIA. I have no regular doctor. If I had I should have an operation a week until there was nothing left of me or of my bank balance I shall not expect you to maul me about with a stethoscope, if that is what you are afraid of I have the lungs of a whale and the digestion of an ostrich I have a clockwork inside I sleep eight hours like a log When I want anything I lose my head so completely about it that I always get it

THE DOCTOR What things do you want mostly?

EPIFANIA. Everything Anything Like a lightning flash And then there is no stopping me.

THE DOCTOR. Everything and anything is nothing

EPIFANIA Five minutes ago I wanted you. Now I have got you

THE DOCTOR Come! You cannot bluff a doctor You may want the sun and the moon and the stars, but you cannot get them

EPIFANIA That is why I take good care not to want them I want only what I can get

THE DOCTOR. Good. A practical intellect. And what do you want at present, for instance?

EPIFANIA That is the devil of it There is nothing one can get except more money

THE DOCTOR What about more men?

EPIFANIA More Alastairs! More Blenderblands! Those are not deep wants At present I want a motor launch

THE DOCTOR There is no such thing in this little place

EPIFANIA Tell the landlord to stop the first one that comes along and buy it

THE DOCTOR Tch! People will not sell their boats like that

EPIFANIA Have you ever tried?

THE DOCTOR No

EPIFANIA I have When I need a car or a motor boat or a launch or anything like that I buy straight off the road or off the river or out of the harbor These things cost thousands when they are new, but next day you cannot get fifty pounds for them Offer £300 for any of them, and the owner dare not refuse he knows he will never get such an offer again

THE DOCTOR Aha! You are a psychologist This is very interesting

EPIFANIA Nonsense! I know how to buy and sell, if that is what you mean

THE DOCTOR That is how good psychologists make money

EPIFANIA Have you made any?

THE DOCTOR No I do not care for money. I care for knowledge

EPIFANIA. Knowledge is no use without money Are you married?

THE DOCTOR. I am married to Science One wife is enough for me, though by my religion I am allowed four

EPIFANIA Four! What do you mean?

THE DOCTOR I am what you call a Mahometan

EPIFANIA Well, you will have to be content with two wives if you marry me

THE DOCTOR Oh! Is there any question of that between us?

EPIFANIA Yes I want to marry you.

THE DOCTOR. Nothing doing, lady. Science is my bride

EPIFANIA. You can have Science as well I shall not be jealous of her. But I made a solemn promise to my father on his deathbed—

THE DOCTOR [*interrupting*] Stop I had better tell you that I made a solemn promise to my mother on her deathbed

EPIFANIA What!!!

THE DOCTOR My mother was a very wise woman. She made me swear to her that if any woman wanted to marry me, and I felt tempted, I would hand the woman two hundred piastres and tell her that unless she would go out into the world with nothing but that and the clothes she stood in, and earn her living alone and unaided for six months, I would never speak to her again

EPIFANIA And if she stood the test?

THE DOCTOR Then I must marry her even if she were the ugliest devil on earth

EPIFANIA And you dare ask me—me, Epifania Ognisanti di Parergal to submit myself to this test—to any test!

THE DOCTOR I swore I have a mother fixation Allah has willed it so I cannot help myself

EPIFANIA What was your mother?

THE DOCTOR A washerwoman A widow. She brought up eleven children I was the youngest, the Benjamin The other ten are honest working folk With their help she made me a man of learning It was her ambition to have a son who could read and write. She prayed to Allah, and he endowed me with the necessary talent

EPIFANIA And you think I will allow myself to be beaten by an old washerwoman?

THE DOCTOR I am afraid so You could never pass the test

EPIFANIA Indeed! And my father's test for a husband worthy of me?

THE DOCTOR Oh! The husband is to be tested too! That never occurred to me

EPIFANIA Nor to your mother either, it seems Well, you know better now I am to give you a hundred and fifty pounds In six months you are to increase it to fifty thousand How is that for a test?

THE DOCTOR. Quite conclusive At the end of the six months I shall not have a penny of it left, praise be to Allah

EPIFANIA You confess yourself beaten?

THE DOCTOR Absolutely Completely

EPIFANIA. And you think I am beaten too
 THE DOCTOR. Hopelessly. You do not know what homeless poverty is, and Allah the Compassionate will take care that you never do.

EPIFANIA. How much is two hundred piastres?

THE DOCTOR. At the rate of exchange contemplated by my mother, about thirtyfive shillings

EPIFANIA. Hand it over.

THE DOCTOR. Unfortunately my mother forgot to provide for this contingency. I have not got thirtyfive shillings. I must borrow them from you

EPIFANIA. I have not a penny on me. No matter. I will borrow it from the chauffeur. He will lend you a hundred and fifty pounds on my account if you dare ask him. Goodbye for six months [*She goes out*]

THE DOCTOR. There is no might and no majesty save in Thee, O Allah; but, oh! most Great and Glorious, is this another of Thy terrible jokes?

ACT III

A basement in the Commercial Road. An elderly man, anxious, poor, and ratlike, sits at a table with his wife. He is poring over his accounts. She, on his left, is sewing buttons on a coat, working very fast. There is a pile of coats on the table to her right waiting to have buttons sewn on, and another to her left which she has finished. The table is draped down to the ground with an old cloth. Some daylight comes in down the stone stairs, but does not extend to the side where the couple sit, which is lighted by a small electric bulb on a wire. Between the stairs and the table a dirty old patched curtain hangs in front of an opening into a farther compartment.

A bell tinkles. The woman instantly stops sewing and conceals the piles of coats under the table. Epifania, her dress covered by an old waterproof, and wearing an elaborately damaged hat, comes down the stairs. She looks at the pair, then looks round her, then goes to the curtain and looks through. The old man makes a dash to prevent her, but is too late. He snatches the curtain from her and bars her passage.

THE MAN. What do you want? What are you doing here?

EPIFANIA. I want employment. A woman told me I should find it here. I am destitute.

THE MAN. Thats not the way to get employment. poking your nose into places that

dont concern you. Get out. There are no women employed here.

EPIFANIA. You lie. There are six women working in there. Who employs them?

THE MAN. Is that the way to talk to me? You think a lot of yourself, dont you? What do you take me for?

EPIFANIA. A worm.

THE MAN [*making a violent demonstration*].!

EPIFANIA. Take care. I can use my fists. I can shoot, if necessary.

THE WOMAN [*hurrying to the man and holding him*]. Take care, Joe. She's an inspector. Look at her shoes.

EPIFANIA. I am not an inspector. And what is the matter with my shoes, pray?

THE WOMAN [*respectfully*]. Well ma'am, could a woman looking for work at tuppence hapenay an hour afford a west end shoe like that? I assure you we dont employ any women here. We're only caretakers.

EPIFANIA. But I saw six women—

THE MAN [*throwing open the curtain*]. Where? Not a soul. Search the whole bloody basement.

THE WOMAN. Hush, hush, Joe. dont speak to the lady like that. You see, ma'am: theres not a soul.

EPIFANIA. Theres a smell. You have given them a signal to hide. You are breaking the law. Give me some work or I will send a postcard to the Home Office.

THE MAN. Look here, lady. Cant we arrange this? What good will it do you to get me into trouble and shut up my little shop?

EPIFANIA. What good will it do me to say nothing?

THE MAN. Well, what about half a crown a week?

EPIFANIA. I cannot live on half a crown a week.

THE MAN. You can if you look round a bit. There are others, you know.

EPIFANIA. Give me the address of the others. If I am to live by blackmail I must have an extended practice.

THE MAN. Well, if I have to pay I dont see why the others shouldnt too. Will you take half a crown? [*He holds up half a crown*]. Look here! Look at it! Listen to it! [*He rings it on the table*]. It's yours, and another every Wednesday if you keep the inspector off me.

EPIFANIA. It's no use ringing half crowns at me. I am accustomed to them. And I feel convinced that you will pay five shillings if I insist.

THE WOMAN Oh, maam, have some feeling for us. You dont know the struggle we have to live

THE MAN [*roughly*] Here we're not beggars I'll pay what the business can afford and not a penny more You seem to know that it can afford five shillings Well, if you know that, you know that it cant afford any more Take your five shillings and be damned to you [*He flings two half crowns on the table*]

THE WOMAN Oh, Joe, dont be so hasty

THE MAN You shut up You think you can beg a shilling or two off, but you cant I can size up a tough lot without looking at her shoes She's got us, and she knows she's got us

EPIFANIA I do not like this blackmailing business Of course if I must I must, but can you not give me some manual work?

THE MAN You want to get a little deeper into our business, dont you?

EPIFANIA. I am as deep as I can go already You are employing six women in there The thung in the corner is a gas engine that makes you a workshop under the Act Except that the sanitary arrangements are probably abominable, there is nothing more for me to know I have you in the hollow of my hand. Give me some work that I can live by or I will have you cleared out like a wasp's nest

THE MAN I have a good mind to clear out now and take some place where you wont find me so easy I am used to changing my address

EPIFANIA That is the best card in your hand You have some business ability Tell me why you cannot give me work to live by just as you give it, I suppose, to the women I saw in there

THE MAN I dont like the people I employ to know too much

EPIFANIA. I see They might call in the inspector

THE MAN Call in the inspector! What sort of fool are you? They dread the inspector more than I do

EPIFANIA Why? Dont they want to be protected?

THE WOMAN The inspector wouldnt protect them, maam he'd only shut up the place and take away their job from them If they thought youd be so cruel as to report them theyd go down on their knees to you to spare them

THE MAN You that know such a lot ought to know that a business like this cant afford

any luxuries It's a cheap labor business As long as I get women to work for their natural wage, I can get along, but no luxuries, mnd you No trade union wages No sanitary arrangements as you call them No lime-washings every six months No separate rooms to eat in No fencing in of dangerous machinery or the like of that not that I care, for I have nothing but the old gas engine that wouldnt hurt a fly, though it brings me under the blasted Workshop Act as you spotted all right I have no big machinery, but I have to undersell those that have it If I put up my prices by a farthing theyd set their machinery going and drop me You might as well ask me to pay trade union wages as do all that the inspector wants I should be out of business in a week

EPIFANIA And what is a woman's natural wage?

THE MAN Tuppence hapeny an hour for twelve hours a day

EPIFANIA Slavery!

THE WOMAN. Oh no, maam nobody could call that slavery A good worker can make from twelve to fifteen shillings a week at it, week in and week out

THE MAN Isnt it what the Government paid at the beginning of the war when all the women were called on to do their bit? Do you expect me to pay more than the British Government?

THE WOMAN I assure you it's the regular and proper wage and always has been, maam

THE MAN Like five per cent at the Bank of England it is This is a respectable business, whatever your inspectors may say

EPIFANIA Can a woman live on twelve shillings a week?

THE MAN Of course she can Whats to prevent her?

THE WOMAN Why, maam, when I was a girl in a match factory I had five shillings a week, and it was a godsend to my mother And a girl who had no family of her own could always find a family to take her in for four and sixpence, and treat her better than if she had been in her father's house

THE MAN I can find you a family what'll do it today, in spite of all the damned doles and wages boards that have upset everything and given girls ideas above their station without giving them the means to pamper themselves

EPIFANIA Well, I will work even for that,

to prove that I can work and support myself
So give me work and have done talking.

THE MAN. Who started talking? You or I?

EPIFANIA. I did I thank you for the information you have given me it has been instructive and to the point. Is that a sufficient apology? And now to work, to work I am in a hurry to get to work

THE MAN. Well, what work can you do?

THE WOMAN. Can you sew? Can you make buttonholes?

EPIFANIA. Certainly not. I dont call that work.

THE MAN. Well, what sort of work are you looking for?

EPIFANIA. Brain work

THE MAN. She's dotty!

EPIFANIA. Your work. Managing work Planning work. Driving work. Let me see what you make here. Tell me how you dispose of it

THE MAN [*to his wife*] You had better get on with your work. Let her see it [*To Epifania, whilst the woman pulls out the pile of coats from under the table and sits down resignedly to her sewing*] And when youve quite satisfied your curiosity, perhaps youll take that five shillings and go

EPIFANIA. Why? Dont you find my arrival a pleasant sort of adventure in this den?

THE MAN. I never heard the like of your cheek, not from nobody [*He sits down to his accounts*].

EPIFANIA [*to the woman, indicating the pile of coats*] What do you do with these when they are finished?

THE WOMAN [*going on with her work*] The man comes with his lorry and takes them away.

EPIFANIA. Does he pay you for them?

THE WOMAN. Oh no. He gives us a receipt for them Mr Superflew pays us for the receipts at the end of the week.

EPIFANIA. And what does Mr Superflew do with the coats?

THE WOMAN. He takes them to the wholesaler that supplies him with the cloth The lorry brings us the cloth when it takes away the finished clothes

EPIFANIA. Why dont you deal directly with the wholesalers?

THE WOMAN. Oh no that wouldnt be right. We dont know who they are, and Mr Superflew does Besides, we couldnt afford a lorry.

EPIFANIA. Does Mr Superflew own the lorry?

THE WOMAN. Oh no that wouldnt be right He hires it by the hour from Bolton's.

EPIFANIA. Is the driver always the same man?

THE WOMAN. Yes, of course always old Tim Goodenough.

EPIFANIA [*to the man*] Write those names for me: Superflew, Bolton's, Goodenough.

THE MAN. Here! I'm not your clerk, you know.

EPIFANIA. You will be, soon. Do as I tell you.

THE MAN. Well of all the cheek—! [*He obeys*]

EPIFANIA. When Goodenough comes round next, tell him to tell Bolton's that he has found somebody who will buy the lorry for fourteen pounds. Tell him that if he can induce Bolton's to part from it at that figure you will give him a pound for himself and engage him at half a crown advance on his present wages to drive it just the same old round to the same places He knows the wholesalers Mr Superflew is superfluous We shall collect not only our own stuff but that of all the other sweaters

THE MAN. Sweaters! Who are you calling sweaters?

EPIFANIA. Man, know thyself. You sweat yourself; you sweat your wife; you sweat those women in there; you live on sweat.

THE MAN. Thats no way to talk about it It isnt civil I pay the right wages, same as everybody pays I give employment that the like of them couldnt make for themselves

EPIFANIA. You are sensitive about it. I am not I am going to sweat Mr Superflew out of existence I am going to sweat Mr Timothy Goodenough instead of allowing Mr Superflew to sweat him.

THE MAN. See here. Does this business belong to me or to you?

EPIFANIA. We shall see Dare you buy the lorry?

THE MAN. Wheres the money to come from?

EPIFANIA. Where does all money come from? From the bank.

THE MAN. You got to put it there first, havnt you?

EPIFANIA. Not in the least. Other people put it there; and the bank lends it to you if it thinks you know how to extend your business.

THE WOMAN [*terrified*] Oh, Joe, dont trust your money in a bank. No good ever comes out of banks for the likes of us Dont let her

tempt you, Joe

EPIFANIA. When had you last a holiday?

THE WOMAN. Me! A holiday! We cant afford holidays I had one on Armistice Day, eighteen years ago

EPIFANIA. Then it cost a world war and the slaughter of twenty millions of your fellow creatures to give you one holiday in your lifetime I can do better for you than that

THE WOMAN. We dont understand that sort of talk here Weve no time for it. Will you please take our little present and go away?

The bell tinkles

THE MAN [*rising*]. Thats Tim, for the clothes

EPIFANIA [*masterfully*]. Sit down. I will deal with Tim

She goes out The man, after a moment of irresolution, sits down helplessly

THE WOMAN [*crying*]. Oh, Joe, dont listen to her dont let her meddle with us. That woman would spend our little savings in a week, and leave us to slave to the end of our days to make it up again I cant go on slaving for ever we're neither of us as young as we were

THE MAN [*sullen*]. What sort of wife are you for a man? You take the pluck out of me every time Dont I see other men swanking round and throwing money about that they get out of the banks? In and out of banks they are, all day. What do they do but smoke cigars and drink champagne? A five pound note is to them what a penny is to me Why shouldnt I try their game instead of slaving here for pence and hapence?

THE WOMAN. Cause you dont understand it, Joe We know our own ways, and though we're poor our ways have never let us down, and they never will if we stick to them. And who would speak to us? who would know us or give us a helping hand in hard times if we began doing things that nobody else does? How would you like to walk down Commercial Road and get nothing but black looks from all your friends and be refused a week's credit in the shops? Joe Ive gone on in our natural ways all these years without a word of complaint, and I can go on long enough still to make us comfortable when we're too old to see what I'm sewing or you to count the pence But if youre going to risk everything and put our money in a bank and change our ways I cant go on I cant go on itll kill me Go up and stop her, Joe Dont let her talk just put her out Be a man, darling

dont be afraid of her Dont break my heart and ruin yourself Oh, dont sit there dithering you dont know what she may be doing Oh! oh! oh! [*She can say no more for sobbing*].

THE MAN [*rising, but not very resolutely*]. There! there! Hold your noise I'm not going to let her interfere with us I'll put her out all right [*He goes to the stairs Epifania comes down*]. Now, missis lets have an understanding

EPIFANIA. No understanding is necessary Tim is sure that Bolton's will take ten pounds for the lorry Tim is my devoted slave Make that poor woman stop howling if you can. I am going now There is not enough work here for me I can do it all in half a day every week I shall take a job as scullery maid at a hotel to fill up my time But first I must go round to the address Tim has given me and arrange that we send them our stuff direct and collect just as Superflew did. When I have arranged everything with them I will come back and arrange everything for you. Meanwhile, carry on as usual Good morning [*She goes out*]

THE MAN [*stupefied*]. It seems to me like a sort of dream What could I do?

THE WOMAN [*who has stopped crying on hearing Epifania's allusion to her*]. Do what she tells us, Joe We're like children—[*She begins crying again softly*]

There is nothing more to be said

ACT IV

The coffee room of The Pig & Whistle, now transmogrified into the lounge of The Cardinal's Hat, a very attractive riverside hotel The long tables are gone, replaced by several teatables with luxurious chairs round them The old side-board, the stuffed fish, the signboards are no more instead there is an elegant double writing desk for two sitters, divided by stationery cases and electric lamps with dainty shades Near it is a table with all the illustrated papers and magazines to hand Farther down the room, towards the side next the door, there is a long well cushioned seat, capable of accommodating three persons With three chairs at the other side it forms a fireside circle The old hatstand has gone to its grave with the sideboard The newly painted walls present an attractive color scheme. The floor is parquetté and liberally supplied with oriental rugs All the appurtenances of a brand new first class hotel lounge are in evidence

Alastair, in boating flannels, is sprawling happily on the long seat, reading an illustrated magazine Patricia, in her gladdest summer rags, is knitting in the middle chair opposite, full of quiet enjoyment

It is a fine summer afternoon, and the general effect is that of a bank holiday paradise.

ALASTAIR I say, Seedy, isn't this jolly?

PATRICIA Yes, darling. it's lovely

ALASTAIR Nothing beats a fine week-end on the river. A pull on the water in the morning to give one a good stretch and a good appetite. A good lunch, and then a good laze. What more can any man desire on earth?

PATRICIA You row so beautifully, Ally I love to see you sculling. And punting too. You look so well standing up in the punt

ALASTAIR It's the quiet of it, the blessed quiet. You are so quiet. I'm never afraid of your kicking up a row about nothing. The river is so smooth. I don't know which is more comforting, you or the river, when I think of myself shooting Niagara three or four times a day at home

PATRICIA Don't think of it, darling. It isn't home. This is home.

ALASTAIR. Yes, dear. You're right. This is what home ought to be, though it's only a hotel

PATRICIA Well, what more could anyone ask but a nice hotel? All the housekeeping done for us. No trouble with the servants. No rates nor taxes. I have never had any peace except in a hotel. But perhaps a man doesn't feel that way

The manager of the hotel, a young man, smartly dressed, enters. He carries the hotel register, which he opens and places on the newspaper table. He then comes obsequiously to his two guests

MANAGER [between them] Good afternoon, sir. I hope you find everything here to your liking.

ALASTAIR Yes, thanks. But what have you done to the old place? When I was here last, a year ago, it was a common pub called The Pig & Whistle.

THE MANAGER It was so until quite lately, sir. My father kept The Pig & Whistle. So did his forefathers right back to the reign of William the Conqueror. Cardinal Wolsey stopped once for an hour at The Pig & Whistle when his mule cast a shoe and had to go to the blacksmith's. I assure you my forefathers thought a lot of themselves. But they

were uneducated men, and ruined the old place by trying to improve it by getting rid of the old things in it. It was on its last legs when you saw it, sir. I was ashamed of it

ALASTAIR Well, you have made a first rate job of it now

THE MANAGER Oh, it was not my doing, sir. I am only the manager. You would hardly believe it if I were to tell you the story of it. Much more romantic, to my mind, than the old tale about Wolsey. But I mustn't disturb you talking. You will let me know if there's anything I can do to make you quite comfortable.

PATRICIA I should like to know about the old Pig if it's romantic. If you can spare the time, of course

THE MANAGER I am at your service, madam, always

ALASTAIR Fire ahead, old man

THE MANAGER. Well, madam, one day a woman came here and asked for a job as a scullery maid. My poor old father hadn't the nerve to turn her out. He said she might just try for a day or two. So she started in. She washed two dishes and broke six. My poor old mother was furious. She thought the world of her dishes. She had no suspicion, poor soul, that they were ugly and common and old and cheap and altogether out of date. She said that as the girl had broken them she should pay for them if she had to stay for a month and have the price stopped out of her wages. Off went the girl to Reading and came back with a load of crockery that made my mother cry. She said we should be disgraced for ever if we served a meal on such old fashioned things. But the very next day an American lady with a boating party bought them right off the table for three times what they cost, and my poor mother never dared say another word. The scullery maid took things into her own hands in a way we could never have done. It was cruel for us; but we couldn't deny that she was always right.

PATRICIA Cruel! What was there cruel in getting nice crockery for you?

THE MANAGER. Oh, it wasn't only that, madam: that part of it was easy and pleasant enough. You see all she had to do with the old crockery was to break it and throw the bits into the dustbin. But what was the matter with the old Pig and Whistle was not the old thick plates that took away your appetite. It was the old people it had

gathered about itself that were past their work and had never been up to much according to modern ideas. They had to be thrown into the street to wander about for a few days and then go into the workhouse. There was the bar that was served by father and mother she dressed up to the nines, as she thought, poor old dear, never dreaming that the world was a day older than when she was married. The scullery maid told them the truth about themselves, and it just cut them to pieces, for it was the truth, and I couldn't deny it. The old man had to give in, because he had raised money on his freehold and was at his wits' end to pay the mortgage interest. The next thing we knew, the girl had paid off the mortgage and got the whip hand of us completely. "It's time for you two to sell your freehold and retire: you are doing no good here," she said.

PATRICIA But that was dreadful, to root them up like that.

THE MANAGER It was hard, but it was the truth. We should have had the brokers in sooner or later if we had gone on. Business is business, and there's no room for sentiment in it. And then, think of the good she did. My parents would never have got the price for the freehold that she gave them. Here was I, ashamed of the place, tied to the old Pig & Whistle by my feeling for my parents, with no prospects. Now the house is a credit to the neighborhood and gives more employment than the poor old Pig did in its best days, and I am the manager of it with a salary and a percentage beyond anything I could have dreamt of.

ALASTAIR. Then she didn't chuck you, old man.

THE MANAGER No, sir. You see, though I could never have made the change myself, I was intelligent enough to see that she was right. I backed her up all through. I have such faith in that woman, sir, that if she told me to burn down the hotel tonight I'd do it without a moment's hesitation. When she puts her finger on a thing it turns into gold every time. The bank would remind my father if he overdrew by five pounds, but the manager keeps pressing overdrafts on her; it makes him miserable when she has a penny to her credit. A wonderful woman, sir: one day a scullery maid, and the next the proprietress of a first class hotel.

PATRICIA. And are the old people satisfied

and happy?

THE MANAGER Well, no: the change was too much for them at their age. My father had a stroke and won't last long, I'm afraid. And my mother has gone a bit silly. Still, it was best for them, and they have all the comforts they care for.

ALASTAIR Well, that's a very moving tale more so than you think, old boy, because I happen to know a woman of that stamp. By the way, I telegraphed for a friend of mine to come and spend the week-end with us here: a Mr Sagamore. I suppose you can find a room for him.

THE MANAGER That will be quite all right, sir, thank you.

PATRICIA Have you many people in the house this week-end?

THE MANAGER Less than usual, madam. We have an Egyptian doctor who takes his meals here: a very learned man. I should think very quiet: not a word to anybody. Then there is another gentleman, an invalid, only just discharged from the Cottage Hospital. The Egyptian doctor recommended our chef to him, and he takes his meals here too. And that is all, madam, unless some fresh visitors arrive.

ALASTAIR Well, we must put up with them.

THE MANAGER By the way, sir, I am sorry to trouble you, but you came up this morning without signing the register. I have brought it up. Would you be so good? [*He fetches the register from the table and presents it to Alastair with his fountain pen.*]

ALASTAIR [*sitting up and taking it on his knees*] Oh, I am sorry. I forgot. [*He signs.*] There you are. [*He puts up his legs again.*]

THE MANAGER Thanks very much, sir. [*He glances at the register before shutting it. The signature surprises him.*] Oh, indeed, sir! We are honored.

ALASTAIR. Anything wrong?

THE MANAGER Oh no, sir, nothing wrong quite the contrary. Mr and Mrs Fitzfassen-den. The name is so unusual. Have I the honor of entertaining the celebrated—

ALASTAIR [*interrupting*] Yes, it's all right. I am the tennis champion and the boxing champion and all the rest of it, but I am here for a holiday and I don't want to hear anything more about it.

THE MANAGER [*shutting the book*] I quite understand, sir. I should not have said anything if it were not that the proprietress of

this hotel, the lady I told you of, is a Mrs Fitzfassenden.

ALASTAIR [*rising with a yell*] What! Let me out of this Pack up, Seedy My bill, please, instantly.

THE MANAGER. Certainly, sir But may I say that she is not on the premises at present and that I do not expect her this week-end

PATRICIA Dont fuss, darling. Weve a perfect right to be in her hotel if we pay our way just like anybody else

ALASTAIR Very well have it your own way But my week-end is spoilt

THE MANAGER Depend on it, she wont come, sir She is getting tired of paying us unexpected visits now that she knows she can depend on me [*He goes out, but immediately looks in again to say*] Your friend Mr Sagamore, sir, coming up with the invalid gentleman [*He holds the door open for Sagamore and Adrian, who come in Then he goes out, taking the register with him*]

Adrian, who comes first, limps badly on two walking sticks, and his head is bandaged He is disagreeably surprised at seeing Fitzfassenden and Patricia

ADRIAN Alastair! Miss Smith! What does this mean, Sagamore? You never told me who you were bringing me to see. you said two friends. Alastair I assure you I did not know you were here Sagamore said some friends who would be glad to see me

PATRICIA Well, we are glad to see you, Mr Blenderbland Wont you sit down?

ALASTAIR But whats happened to you, old chap? What on earth have you done to yourself?

ADRIAN [*exasperated*] Everyone asks me what I have done to myself. I havnt done anything to myself I suppose you mean this and this [*he indicated his injuries*] Well, they are what your wife has done to me That is why Sagamore should not have brought me here

ALASTAIR. I say: I am frightfully sorry, old chap.

PATRICIA [*rising solicitously*] Do sit down, Mr Blenderbland Rest yourself on that couch. [*Arranging cushions*] Dear! dear!

ALASTAIR. Eppy is like that, you know

ADRIAN Yes I know now But I ought not to be here Sagamore should not have brought me here

PATRICIA But why not? I assure you we're

delighted to see you. We dont mind what Mrs Fitzfassenden does.

ADRIAN. But I do. You are most kind, but I cannot claim the privilege of a friend and at the same time be the plaintiff in an action for assault and battery.

ALASTAIR. Yes you can, old chap The situation is not new The victims always come to us for sympathy Make yourself comfortable

ADRIAN [*reluctantly sitting down and disposing his damaged limbs along the couch*] Well, it's most kind of you, and I really cant stand any longer. But I dont understand why Sagamore should have played such a trick on me And, of course, on you too

Patricia returns to her chair, and resumes her knitting

SAGAMORE [*taking a chair next Patricia on her left*] Well, the truth of the matter is that Blenderbland wont be reasonable, and I thought you two might help me to bring him to his senses

ADRIAN [*obstnatel*] It's no use, Sagamore. Two thousand five hundred. And costs. Not a penny less.

SAGAMORE. Too much Ridiculous A jury might give five hundred if there was a clear disablement from earning, or if the defendant had done something really womanly, like throwing vitriol. But you are only a sleeping partner in the firm your father founded you dont really earn your income. Besides, hang it all! a man accusing a woman of assault!

ALASTAIR Why didnt you give her a punch in the solar plexus?

ADRIAN Strike a woman! Impossible.

ALASTAIR Rot! If a woman starts fighting she must take what she gets and deserves.

PATRICIA. Look at the marks she's left on you, Mr Blenderbland! You shouldnt have put up with it it only encourages her

ALASTAIR. Search me for marks you wont find any Youd have found a big mark on her the first time she tried it on me There was no second time

ADRIAN Unfortunately I have neither your muscle nor your knowledge of how to punch But I will take lessons when I get well And she shall pay for them Two thousand five hundred. And medical expenses And costs

SAGAMORE And cab fare to the Cottage Hospital, I suppose

ADRIAN No I went in her own car But now you remind me, I tipped the chauffeur Now dont misunderstand me It is not the money.

But I won't be beaten by a woman. It's a point of honor of self-respect.

SAGAMORE Yes, but how do you arrive at the figure? Why is your honor and self-respect worth two thousand five hundred pounds and not two thousand five hundred millions?

ADRIAN My brother got two thousand five hundred from the railway company when an electric truck butted into him on the platform at Paddington. I will not let Epifania off with less. It was an unprovoked, brutal, cowardly assault.

SAGAMORE Was it quite unprovoked? You will not get a jury to swallow that without a peck of salt?

ADRIAN I have told you over and over again that it was absolutely unprovoked. But the concussion from which I suffered obliterated all consciousness of what happened immediately before the assault: the last thing I can recollect was a quite ordinary conversation about her father's money.

SAGAMORE So much the worse for you. She can accuse you of anything she likes. And remember no man can get damages out of a British jury unless he goes into court as a moral man.

ADRIAN Do you suggest that I am not a moral man?

SAGAMORE No, but Mrs Fitzfassenden's counsel will if you take her into court.

ADRIAN Stuff! Would any jury believe that she and I were lovers on the strength of a sprained ankle, a dislocated knee, and a lump on my head the size of an ostrich's egg?

SAGAMORE The best of evidence against you. It's only lovers that have lovers' quarrels. And suppose she pleads self-defence against a criminal assault!

ADRIAN She dare not swear to such a lie.

SAGAMORE How do you know it's a lie? You don't know what happened at the end. You had concussion of the brain.

ADRIAN Yes, after the assault.

SAGAMORE But it obliterated your consciousness of what happened before the assault. How do you know what you did in these moments?

ADRIAN Look here. Are you my solicitor or hers?

SAGAMORE Fate seems to have made me the solicitor of everybody in this case. If I am forced to throw up either her case or yours, I must throw up yours. How can I afford to lose a client with such an income

and such a temper? Her tantrums are worth two or three thousand a year to any solicitor.

ADRIAN Very well, Sagamore. You see my condition: you know that right and justice are on my side. I shall not forget this.

The manager enters, looking very serious.

THE MANAGER [to Alastair] I am extremely sorry, sir. Mrs Fitzfassenden is downstairs with the Egyptian doctor. I really did not expect her.

EPIFANIA [dashing into the room and addressing herself fiercely to the manager] You have allowed my husband to bring a woman to my hotel and register her in my name. You are fired. [She is behind the couch and does not see Adrian. Sagamore rises.]

THE MANAGER I am sorry, madam. I did not know that the gentleman was your husband. However, you are always right. Do you wish me to go at once or to carry on until you have replaced me?

EPIFANIA I do not wish you to go at all. You are re-engaged. Throw them both out, instantly.

ALASTAIR. Ha ha ha!

SAGAMORE Your manager cannot throw Alastair out. Alastair can throw all of us out, if it comes to that. As to Miss Smith, this is a licensed house, and she has as much right to be here as you or I.

EPIFANIA I will set fire to the hotel if necessary. [She sees Adrian.] Hallo! What is this? Adrian here too! What has happened to your head? What are those sticks for? [To the manager] Send the doctor here at once. [To Adrian] Have you hurt yourself?

The manager hurries out, glad to escape from the mêlée.

ADRIAN Hurt myself! Hurt myself!

EPIFANIA Has he been run over?

ADRIAN This woman has half killed me, and she asks have I hurt myself! I fell down the whole flight of stairs. My ankle was sprained. My knee was twisted. The small bone of my leg was broken. I ricked my spine. I had to give them a subscription at the Cottage Hospital, where your man took me. I had to go from there to a nursing home: twelve guineas a week. I had to call in three Harley Street surgeons, and none of them knew anything about dislocated knees: they wanted to cut my knee to see what was the matter with it. I had to take it to a bone-setter, and he charged me fifty guineas.

EPIFANIA Well, why did you not walk

downstairs properly? Were you drunk?

ADRIAN [*suffocating*] I—

SAGAMORE [*cutting in quickly*] He declares that his injuries were inflicted by you when you last met, Mrs Fitzfassenden

EPIFANIA By me! Am I a prizefighter? Am I a coalheaver?

ADRIAN Both

SAGAMORE Do you deny that you assaulted him?

EPIFANIA. Of course I deny it. Anything more monstrous I never heard. What happened was that he insulted my father grossly, without the slightest provocation, at a moment when I had every reason to expect the utmost tenderness from him. The blood rushed to my head the next thing I remember is that I was lying across the table, trembling, dying. The doctor who found me can tell you what my condition was.

ADRIAN I don't care what your condition was. What condition did your chauffeur find me in?

SAGAMORE. Then neither of you has the least notion of how this affair ended.

ADRIAN. I have medical evidence.

EPIFANIA So have I.

ADRIAN Well, we shall see. I am not going to be talked out of my case.

EPIFANIA What do you mean by your case?

SAGAMORE. He is taking an action against you.

EPIFANIA An action! Very well you know my invariable rule. Fight him to the last ditch, no matter what it costs. Take him to the House of Lords if necessary. We shall see whose purse will hold out longest. I will not be blackmailed.

ADRIAN. You think your father's money places you above the law?

EPIFANIA [*flushing*] Again!

She raises her fists. Alastair seizes her from behind and whirls her away towards Sagamore, then places himself on guard between her and the couch, balancing his fist warningly.

ALASTAIR Now! now! now! None of that Toko, my girl, toko.

SAGAMORE Toko! What is toko?

ALASTAIR. She knows. Toko is an infallible medicine for calming the nerves. A punch in the solar plexus and a day in bed—that's toko.

EPIFANIA You are my witness, Mr Sagamore, how I go in fear of my husband's brutal violence. He is stronger than I am. He can batter me, torture me, kill me. It is the last

argument of the lower nature against the higher. My innocence is helpless. Do your worst [*She sits down in Sagamore's chair with great dignity*].

ALASTAIR Quite safe now, ladies and gentlemen. [*He picks up his illustrated paper, and retires with it to one of the remoter tea-tables, where he sits down to read as quietly as may be*].

ADRIAN [*to Epifania*] Now you know what I felt. It serves you right.

EPIFANIA. Yes; go on. Insult me. Threaten me. Blackmail me. You can all do it with impunity now.

SAGAMORE [*behind her chair*] Don't take it that way, Mrs Fitzfassenden. There is no question of blackmailing or insulting you. I only want to settle this business of Mr Blenderbland's injuries before we go into the matrimonial question.

EPIFANIA I want to hear no more of Mr Blenderbland and his ridiculous injuries.

SAGAMORE Do be a little reasonable, Mrs Fitzfassenden. How are we to discuss the compensation due to Mr Blenderbland without mentioning his injuries?

EPIFANIA There is no compensation due to Mr Blenderbland. He deserved what he got, whatever that was.

SAGAMORE. But he will take an action against you.

EPIFANIA Take one against him first.

SAGAMORE. What for?

EPIFANIA For anything, only don't bother me about it. Claim twenty thousand pounds damages. I tell you I will not be blackmailed.

ADRIAN Neither will I. I am entitled to compensation and I mean to have it.

SAGAMORE [*coming between them*] Steady! steady! please. I cannot advise either of you to go to law, but quite seriously, Mrs Fitzfassenden, Mr Blenderbland is entitled to some compensation. You can afford it.

EPIFANIA Mr Sagamore, a woman as rich as I am cannot afford anything. I have to fight to keep every penny I possess. Every beggar, every blackmailer, every swindler, every charity, every testimonial, every political cause, every league and brotherhood and sisterhood, every church and chapel, every institution of every kind on earth is busy from morning to night trying to bleed me to death. If I weaken for a moment, if I let a farthing go, I shall be destitute by the end of the month. I subscribe a guinea a year to the Income Tax Payers' Defence League,

majesty and no might [*He drops her hand*]

EPIFANIA My pulse will never change. this is the love I crave for I will marry you Mr Sagamore see about a special licence the moment you have got rid of Alastair

THE DOCTOR It is not possible We are bound by our vows

EPIFANIA Well, have I not passed your mother's test? You shall have an accountant's certificate I learned in the first half hour of my search for employment that the living wage for a single woman is five shillings a week Before the end of the week I had made enough to support me for a hundred years I did it honestly and legitimately I explained the way in which it was done

THE DOCTOR It was not the way of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate Had you added a farthing an hour to the wages of those sweated women, that wicked business would have crashed on your head. You sold it to the man Superfluous for the last penny of his savings, and the women still slave for him at one piastre an hour

EPIFANIA You cannot change the market price of labor not Allah himself can do that But I came to this hotel as a scullery maid the most incompetent scullery maid that ever broke a dinner service I am now its owner, and there is no tuppence hapenny an hour here

THE DOCTOR The hotel looks well in photographs, and the wages you pay would be a fortune to a laborer on the Nile But what of the old people whose natural home this place had become? the old man with his paralytic stroke? the old woman gone mad? the cast out creatures in the workhouse? Was not this preying on the poverty of the poor? Shall I, the servant of Allah, live on such gains? Shall I, the healer, the helper, the guardian of life and the counsellor of health, unite with the exploiter of misery?

EPIFANIA I have to take the world as I find it

THE DOCTOR The wrath of Allah shall overtake those who leave the world no better than they found it

EPIFANIA I think Allah loves those who make money

SAGAMORE All the evidence is that way, certainly

THE DOCTOR I do not see it so I see that riches are a curse, poverty is a curse, only in the service of Allah is there justice, righteousness, and happiness But all this talk is idle

This lady has easily fulfilled the condition imposed by my mother But I have not fulfilled the condition imposed by the lady's father

EPIFANIA You need not trouble about that The six months have not expired. I will shew you how to turn your hundred and fifty pounds into fifty thousand

THE DOCTOR You cannot It is gone

EPIFANIA Oh, you cannot have spent it all you who live like a mouse There must be some of it left

THE DOCTOR Not a penny Not a piastre Allah—

EPIFANIA. Oh, bother Allah! What did you do with it?

THE DOCTOR Allah is never bothered. On that afternoon when you left me to earn your own living I called upon the Merciful, the Compassionate, to reveal to me whether you were not one of the strokes of his infinite humor Then I sat down and took up a newspaper And behold! a paragraph headed Wills and Bequests I read a name that I cannot remember Mrs Somebody of Clapham Park, one hundred and twentytwo thousand pounds She had never done anything but live in Clapham Park, and she left £122,000. But what was the next name? It was that of the teacher who changed my whole life and gave me a new soul by opening the world of science to me I was his assistant for four years He used to make his own apparatus for his experiments, and one day he needed a filament of metal that would resist a temperature that melted platinum like sealing wax

EPIFANIA Buy his patent for me if it has not been snapped up

THE DOCTOR He never took out a patent He believed that knowledge is no man's property And he had neither time nor money to waste in patent offices Millions have been made out of that discovery of his by people who care nothing about science and everything about money He left four hundred pounds and a widow the good woman who had been a second mother to me A shilling a day for her at most not even one piastre an hour

EPIFANIA That comes of marrying an incompetent dreamer Are you going to beg for her? I warn you I am tired of destitute widows I should be a beggar myself if I took them all on my shoulders

THE DOCTOR Have no fear The Merciful,

the Compassionate heard the prayer of the widow. Listen I once cured a Prime Minister when he imagined himself to be ill I went to him and told him that it was the will of Allah that the widow should have a civil list pension She received it a hundred pounds a year. I went to the great Metallurgical Trust which exploits his discovery, and told them that her poverty was a scandal in the face of Allah. They were rich and generous they made a special issue of founders' shares for her, worth three hundred a year to her. They called it letting her in on the ground floor. May her prayers win them favor from Him save in whom there is no might and no majesty! But all this took time The illness, the nurse, the funeral, the disposal of the laboratory, the change to a cheaper lodging, had left her without a penny, though no doctor and no lawyer took a farthing, and the shopkeepers were patient, for the spirit of Allah worked more strongly upon them than on the British Treasury, which clamored for its little death duty. Between the death and the pensions there was a gap exactly one hundred and fifty pounds wide. He who is just and exact supplied that sum by your chauffeur's hands and by mine. It rejoiced my heart as money had never rejoiced it before. But instead of coming to you with fifty thousand pounds I am in arrear with my bill for my daily bread in your hotel, and am expecting every day to be told by your manager that this cannot go on I must settle.

ALASTAIR Well, old man, you may not have done a lot for yourself; but you have done damned well for the widow. And you have escaped Eppy. She wont marry you with your pockets empty.

EPIFANIA Pray why? Fifty thousand pounds must have been made out of that discovery ten times over The doctor, in putting my money into the widow's necessary expenses, may be said to have made a retrospective investment in the discovery And he has shewn the greatest ability in the affair has he not, Mr Sagamore?

SAGAMORE Unquestionably He has bowled out the Prime Minister. He has bowled out the Imperial Metallurgical Trust He has settled the widow's affairs to perfection.

THE DOCTOR But not my own affairs I am in debt for my food.

EPIFANIA Well, if you come to that, I am in debt for my food I got a letter this morning

from my purveyors to say that I have paid them nothing for two years, and unless I let them have something on account they will be obliged to resort to the premises.

THE DOCTOR. What does that mean?

EPIFANIA Sell my furniture.

THE DOCTOR You cannot sell mine, I am afraid. I have hardly any.

BLENDERBLAND. If you have a stick she will sell it She is the meanest woman in England.

EPIFANIA That is why I am also the richest. Mr Sagamore: my mind is made up I will marry this doctor. Ascertain his name and make the necessary arrangements

BLENDERBLAND. You take care, doctor. She is unfaithful to her husband in wanting to marry you She flirted with me took me down the river and made me believe I was to be Alastair's successor before ever she saw you. See what she has done to me! She will do it to you when the next man takes her fancy.

THE DOCTOR [*to Epifania*] What have you to say to that?

EPIFANIA You must learn to take chances in this world This disappointed philanderer tries to frighten you with my unfaithfulness He has never been married: I have And I tell you that in the very happiest marriages not a day passes without a thousand moments of unfaithfulness You begin by thinking you have only one husband. you find you have a dozen. There is a creature you hate and despise and are tied to for life; and before breakfast is over the fool says something nice and becomes a man whom you admire and love; and between these extremes there are a thousand degrees with a different man and woman at each of them. A wife is all women to one man she is everything that is devilish: the thorn in his flesh, the jealous termagant, the detective dogging all his movements, the nagger, the scolder, the worrier He has only to tell her an affectionate lie and she is his comfort, his helper, at best his greatest treasure, at worst his troublesome but beloved child All wives are all these women in one, all husbands all these men in one. What do the unmarried know of this infinitely dangerous heart tearing everchanging life of adventure that we call marriage? Face it as you would face a dangerous operation have you not performed hundreds of them?

THE DOCTOR Of a surety there is no wit and no wisdom like that of a woman ensnaring the mate chosen for her by Allah. Yet I am

very well as I am Why should I change? I shall be very happy as an old bachelor

EPIFANIA [*flinging out her wrist at him*] Can you feel my pulse every day as an old bachelor?

THE DOCTOR [*taking her wrist and mechanically taking out his watch at the same time*] Ah! I had forgotten the pulse One, two, three it is irresistible it is a pulse in a hundred thousand I love it I cannot give it up

BLENDERBLAND You will regret it to the last day of your life

EPIFANIA Mr Sagamore you have your instructions

SAGAMORE [*bows*]

PATRICIA Congratulations, darling

And that is how the story ends in capitalist countries In Russia, however, and in countries with Communist sympathies, the people demand that the tale shall have an edifying moral. Accordingly, when the doctor, feeling Epifania's pulse, says that he loves it and cannot give it up, Blenderbland continues the conversation as follows

BLENDERBLAND Take care Her hand is accursed It is the hand of Midas it turns everything it touches to gold.

THE DOCTOR My hand is more deeply accursed. Gold flies away from it Why am I always poor? I do not like being poor

EPIFANIA. Why am I always rich? I do not like being rich

ALASTAIR You'd better both go to Russia, where there are neither rich nor poor

EPIFANIA Why not? I buy nothing but Russian stock now

BLENDERBLAND The Russians would shoot you as they would a mad dog You are a bloated capitalist, you know

EPIFANIA I am a capitalist here, but in Russia I should be a worker. And what a worker! My brains are wasted here the wealth they create is thrown away on idlers and their parasites, whilst poverty, dirt, dis-

ease, misery and slavery surround me like a black sea in which I may be engulfed at any moment by a turn of the money market Russia needs managing women like me In Moscow I shall not be a millionairess, but I shall be in the Sovnarkom within six months and in the Politbureau before the end of the year Here I have no real power, no real freedom, and no security at all. we may all die in the workhouse In Russia I shall have such authority! such scope for my natural powers! as the Empress Catharine never enjoyed. I swear that before I have been twenty years in Russia every Russian baby shall weigh five pounds heavier and every Russian man and woman live ten years longer I shall not be an empress, and I may work myself to death, but in a thousand years from now holy Russia shall again have a patron saint, and her name shall be Saint Epifania.

BLENDERBLAND The egotism of that woman!!

SAGAMORE I am afraid there are no saints now in Russia

THE DOCTOR There are saints everywhere they are the one species you cannot liquidate Kings, emperors, conquerors, pontiffs and all the other idols are swept away sooner or later, and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot set them up again, but the saints shall reign for ever and ever in the temple of the hammer and the sickle But we must not go to Russia, because the Russians do not need us they have stayed at home and saved their own souls Ought not we to stay at home and save ours Why not make the British Empire a Soviet republic?

EPIFANIA By all means, but we shall have to liquidate all the adult inhabitants and begin with the newly born And the first step to that is to get married Mr Sagamore make the necessary arrangements.

SAGAMORE [*bows*]

PATRICIA Congratulations, darling

THE END

